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May 17, 1856.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

ORIGIN, CHARACTER AND INTERPRETATION

OF

SCRIPTURAL PROPHECY.

IN SEVEN DISCOURSES.

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL OF THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

WITH NOTES.

BY SAMUEL H. TURNER, D.D.,

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THOUGHTS ON THE ORIGIN, CHARACTER, AND INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURAL PROPHECY. IN SEVEN DISCOURSES.

"This is the most lucid, correct, and satisfactory general treatise on the Scriptural Prophecies that has ever fallen in my way. The author has gone over the whole ground, surveyed every part critically and candidly, and presents us with a chart to guide future investigators. On the subject of a double sense, or what Dr. Lowth calls the mystic allegory, I have seen nothing so full and satisfactory. These profound discourses dispel mists from the mind, and make the subject clear."—*Rev. James Murdock, D. D.*

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The reader will perceive that the eighth Discourse does not make a part of the series. It was added chiefly on account of the connection of the subject of it with that of the others.

To the late Senior Class, and the present Middle and Senior Classes, of the General Theological Seminary.

My Dear Young Friends,—

In compliance with your kind request, this little volume on the Origin and Character of Scriptural Prophecy now makes its appearance. I offer no apology for the publication, as it was within my power to withhold it. But, believing that the Discourses imbodied principles both correct in themselves and practically useful, I felt the less reluctance to acquiesce in your wish, and to give them publicity. I was further influenced by the consideration that the time which, during our divinity course, can be devoted to this most interesting and important department, is so very limited, that the student can hardly get even the most meagre outline of it. And yet its usefulness and practical bearing can scarcely be overrated, especially in the present state of the Christian world. Although the few pages here presented to you contain little more than general intimations and principles, they may suggest better

thoughts, more perfect directions, and fuller developments founded thereon. To you and others engaged in theological studies, must the Church look for these. The foundation which, by the good providence of God, you are here in a condition to lay, may become the groundwork of some noble superstructure of Christian industry, enterprise, energy and talent, brought into activity, cherished, directed, encouraged, and propelled by divine grace flowing from the fountain of all wisdom. Although it is a truth of which you ought never to lose sight, that in cultivating theological science as well as practical religion, you can do nothing without God, yet you ought to be equally impressed by the encouraging truth, that his aid is ever ready to give effect to your endeavors. That your appreciation of the vast importance of forming a thorough acquaintance with his revealed word as the only firm basis of a lasting system of theology, may be strengthened and increased, and that your studies therein may be blessed with abundant success to your own satisfaction and to the glory of his great name, is the sincere prayer of your affectionate friend and servant in the Lord,

SAMUEL H. TURNER.

Seminary, October, 1851.

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DISCOURSE I.

PROPHECY: ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.—2 Peter i. 20, 21.

The genuineness and canonical authority of the second epistle of St. Peter have been subjected to some doubt. In the very early ages of the church, its claim to apostolic origin was for a time unsettled; and its remarkable coincidence in some respects with the epistle of St. Jude, has, in modern times, led certain writers to imagine that portions of the one epistle have been borrowed from the other. The similarity which alone has been supposed to sanction this opinion may perhaps be accounted for, if we consider that the writers were intimate associates, and in their descriptions and censures had the same class of persons in view, if not indeed the same individuals; and the temporary hesitancy of some portions of the early church in recog-

nizing the letter as the second of the distinguished apostle, shows clearly how extremely cautious they were not to put the stamp of inspired authority on any production, without the most direct and unexceptionable evidence of the legitimacy of its claim. Allusions to the epistle, and quotations from it, found in the writings of the earliest fathers,* abundantly prove that from the latter part of the first century it was regarded as a Christian production, worthy of the highest consideration. The internal evidence compels the candid reader either to allow its genuineness and divine character, or to stigmatize it as an imposture, a pious fraud, bearing on its very face the marks of grossest hypocrisy, not to say blasphemy. The extravagance of the latter supposition, its utter inconsistency with the universally admitted laws of evidence and with the whole tenor of the epistle itself, is too palpably evident to require a word of illustration.

The class of persons whom the apostle finds it necessary to warn and rebuke, were grossly immoral in their lives. As consistency required, they became thoroughly infidel in their maxims, and ridiculed the idea of divine revelation, and any expectations founded on prophetic inspiration. But the future† glorious and powerful coming of the once despised Galilean is unhesitatingly affirmed by St. Peter. He ap

* Note I. † Note II.

peals to the miraculous proof afforded by the Lord himself, of which he gives the fact of the transfiguration as the most striking and illustrious exhibition. He appeals also to the no less impressive evidence developed by the fulfilment of prophecy. In this connection he introduces the important declaration of the text: "Knowing this first," as a matter of principal interest, "that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation: for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The words *prophet* and *prophecy* are usually in common language limited to the idea of predicting future events, not discernible by merely human foresight and sagacity. Such limitation, however, is not in accordance with its general use in Scripture. It is not essential to the character of a prophet as such, that he shall announce things to come. The proper, and probably the original meaning of this word is, one who speaks as God's substitute or ambassador. Thus it is said of Moses, "I have made thee a *god* to Pharaoh, and Aaron shall be thy *prophet*,"* of which the language that precedes is explanatory: "He shall be thy *spokesman* unto the people; he shall be to thee *instead of a mouth*, and thou shalt be to him *instead of God*."† To the same purpose we read in the

* Exod. vii. 1. † Ibid. iv. 16.

prophet Jeremiah, "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be *as my mouth.*"* The two words anciently used by the Greeks to denote this character, seem to be nearly equivalent,† meaning one who speaks *for*, (before,) or *under*, that is, in the place of another. This is undoubtedly the meaning of the term where it first occurs in the Bible, in the narrative of Abraham's residence with Abimelech. The Almighty warns the king of Gerar in a dream not to injure the patriarch, adding: "For he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live."‡ The friend of God is thus declared to be a sacred personage, the interpreter of God, speaking as his agent. This is also a very usual sense of the word in the New Testament. A prophet is a messenger of God, divinely inspired or directed and commissioned to communicate his will to men, to extend the knowledge of his character, and thus to advance his glory.

Prophecy, therefore, might be understood in the enlarged sense of religious truths promulged through divine influence, and the text might be supposed to involve the assertion, that such communications are not to be at all subjected to the scrutiny of private judgment. But such an exposition would be at variance with the whole analogy of God's disclosures to his creatures, and especially with that of his revealed word,

* Jer. xv. 19.

† Προφήτης and ὑποφήτης.

‡ Gen. xx. 7.

which uniformly appeals to the conscience and understanding of every reader and hearer, requiring him to use his best efforts in order to comprehend and appreciate its truths. Neither would such a view of the word comport with the antithetic character of the next verse; for the supposition that individual judgment is not to be applied in order to ascertain the meaning of God's word, has no necessary or logical connection with the statement, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This surely affords no reason against using one's own private endeavors in order to understand it. Besides, the connection in which the language of the text occurs, and the general scope of the apostle's address, proves that he employed the word in its more restricted meaning. Its immediate association with the statement of our Lord's transfiguration, as another ground in addition to that of miracles whereon to establish his divine authority, and the character of the infidel sensualists opposed, who ridiculed any expectation of the fulfilment of ancient predictions, may also be considered as confirming this signification, and compelling us to understand the apostle as speaking of *predictions properly so called*, and not of religious instructions in general, though they be divinely communicated.

Taking the word *prophecy* in the text in this limited meaning, the apostle's language has

been explained thus: 'Prophecy is not to be interpreted in accordance with the mere will of the interpreter. He is not to be influenced by his own private views, his prepossessions and prejudices. He is to use all proper aids, and with candor and unbiassed mind to receive the prophetic declarations of the inspired authors.' But this remark is equally applicable to any other part of the sacred oracles; and indeed it is so self-evident a truth, that a formal announcement of it would seem wholly unnecessary. The more commonly received exposition, therefore, is this: 'The predictions contained in holy scripture are not to be interpreted simply by the ordinary principles applied to compositions in general. Being in their very nature peculiar, the principles on which they should be explained must partake of the same character. In as much as they contain accounts of events to transpire in future periods, it is not to be expected that a clear view of their meaning can be obtained, until the events predicted shall have taken place. We must patiently wait for the development of the facts, a comparison of which with the prophetic announcement can alone determine the meaning. No prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation. It does not, like other propositions relating to facts or doctrines, contain within its own expressions its evident and undeniable sense. The future events which are the subject of the prediction

must become matters of history, before we can understand the prophet's declarations.'

The general statement contained in this view of the apostle's language is undoubtedly correct. But it must be taken with suitable limitations. The prophet, when under divine direction to announce events hereafter to transpire, or characters to come into the world, or certain states and conditions of society to be developed, addresses himself to his contemporaries; and although it is not for them alone that he is made the agent to communicate the mind of God, yet undoubtedly his announcements are intended to convey to them some clear and intelligible thought. The whole prediction involved, indeed, many particulars that were at the time obscure. It may have been difficult, and even impossible, to ascertain the meaning and bearing of all the circumstances and details of the prophecy; to determine with certainty how much of it was literal, and how much involved in figure. There is reason to think that the prophet was not always conscious himself of the entire meaning of his own predictions, much less could they have been fully understood by others of his day. Still, they were so clear as to impart to the contemporaries of the prophet a general idea of what was foretold, sufficiently vivid, definite, and distinct, to awaken the attention of the serious and inquiring mind. The events themselves, when they took

place, threw additional light on the predictions, cleared up all their obscurities, and determined the meaning and application of all doubtful expressions. It may be granted, then, that the events must be brought in view, before the prophecies relating to them can be thoroughly understood and fully appreciated.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether this is, after all, the necessary, or even the most probable meaning of the text. Certainly we need not thus limit the apostle's language. There is evidently an antithesis between the two parts of the two verses. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." The next verse gives the reason: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but," on the contrary, (as seems plainly implied,) "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." According to the exposition just given, the latter statement does not imply a reason for the former, or stand in contradistinction to it. That the event predicted must be compared with the language of the prediction, may be very true; but it is difficult to perceive how this is proved or illustrated by the statement, that the prophet spake under divine influence. This might be equally true, if such comparison were wholly unnecessary.

The same objection may be urged against another view which has been taken of this passage. It has been thought to mean, that the

prophecies of holy scripture are not to be limited to the particular subject specified by the prophet. His language has a much wider application, comprehending, it may be, many subjects analogous, in a greater or less degree, to that originally designated. Thus, for example, the predictions respecting Babylon, Edom, Jerusalem, are not to be limited to the historical objects thus particularized. They comprehend also all those other objects, moral, ecclesiastical, spiritual, of which these were representatives.* Thus the apostle is supposed to characterize prophecy. 'It is not of private or isolated interpretation, but in its field of view is comprehensive and enlarged.' Without at all questioning the truth and importance of the principle involved in this exposition, it is sufficient for my immediate purpose to remark, that it implies the same want of connection before noted with the subsequent statement which the apostle makes as a reason for the former one. It is proper, therefore, to examine, whether St. Peter's words do not admit another meaning, free from this objection.

If we read the whole text attentively, and without having adopted any preconceived view, we cannot fail to perceive that the apostle's leading thought is this: 'That scriptural prophecy was delivered under divine influence; its origin is heavenly.' The latter of the two

* Note III.

verses contains this thought expressed both negatively and affirmatively: "prophecy came not by the will of man, but by the Holy Ghost." It is impossible to make this explanation any plainer. And the negative expression of the thought is only a repetition of the statement made in the former verse, "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation;" the antithetic clause, which implies what is a proof, is the affirmative expression with which the apostle concludes: "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The word rendered *private*, often denotes *what is one's own*, *what properly* or *peculiarly belongs to one*. The author therefore intends to deny that any prophecy of scripture is the result of mere human effort at explication and solution* of God's purposes and dealings, and to assert that it can only proceed from divine influence. 'No prophecy of scripture is of one's own interpretation (of what God may intend and do;) for not by the will of man did prophecy at any time come, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

It must be obvious to the reader of the whole epistle, that this view of the text coincides with the immediate context, and also with the occasion which led the apostle to write it. The divine origination of scriptural prophecy is proof

* Ἐπιλύσις a loosing, solution: Passow. In the later Greek writers, it is used for exposition.

that he and his brethren had "not followed cunningly devised fables," and was also sufficient assurance, that he, under whose inspiring guidance it had proceeded, would in his own time accomplish it, both by inflicting punishment on the mocking rejecters of the truth, and by rewarding those who in faith and patience quietly awaited the result.

This important portion of scripture presents us, therefore, with the essential characteristic of a true prophet. Ignorant and conceited objectors to revelation, unwilling to take the trouble carefully to investigate divine prophecies, and at the same time knowing just enough of the subject to perceive that it has its difficulties, have not scrupled to represent them as productions that cannot be understood. They have compared these oracles of God to the unconnected ravings of the agitated Sibyl, or the enigmatical sayings of the priests of Apollo, susceptible of any meaning that circumstance and passion may find it convenient to suggest. They represent the prophets as visionary enthusiasts, men of overheated imagination, who spoke with an inaccuracy and obscurity which, while it made them unintelligible to others, proved that they themselves had no very clear perception of their own meaning, or purposely expressed it with ambiguity. Hence it would follow, of course, that they must have been either ignorant or cunning, or both, and that

their productions must partake of their character.

But there is another class of objectors, the very opposite to these. It is curious to remark, and no less interesting to observe the fact, as affording a striking comment on the illusions of the human mind when deceived by misguiding error, that in our own day certain distinguished opponents of divine revelation have taken a stand the very opposite. Ask the learned disciple of naturalism what he thinks of the Old Testament prophets. He will tell you that they were men of extensive information, profound wisdom, enlarged views of the political and religious condition of their own and of surrounding countries, strongly attached to the theocracy, able to penetrate farther into the probable results of causes in operation than men in general, persons who were enlightened statesmen, thoroughly acquainted with the history of past ages, perfectly conversant with the springs of human action, and particularly with the political views of nations connected by interest and policy with the Jewish people. They were men of extraordinary sagacity, and, from the well-known operations of causes with which they were familiar, they were able to calculate with moral certainty the results which they predicted and announced as oracles from God; men who occasionally held honorable stations in the community, and in point of influence

and practical authority were not inferior to the heads of the nation. But, although the attempts that have been made to support this scheme are exceedingly plausible, its defenders have been obliged to set at naught all historical evidence militating against it. They have been compelled to abandon the authenticity of several books, although uniformly sustained by a clear and undeniable tradition of the people of whose literature they make a part, reaching—so far as we have information enabling us to judge—up to the days of their respective authors. They have been compelled to adopt interpretations not merely at variance with those generally and from time immemorial received, but also with the whole character of the Bible as such, and better suited to the fables of oriental mythology; interpretations assumed without proof of the theory on which they rest, and contradictory and frigid in the results that they exhibit.

But the gratuitous assertions of infidel ignorance, and the equally gratuitous claims of rationalistic learning, are alike utterly inadequate to explain the phenomena of the prophetic Scriptures. A Scriptural prophet is neither an ignorant and crafty fanatic, nor a sagacious politician, but a divinely directed and inspired teacher of true religion. In the sense of the word as now under consideration, he is a person endowed with the faculty of foreseeing what is future. As a seer he looks into ages to come, and des-

cries distant events far beyond the ken of human view. His declarations are of absolute certainty and of vital truth. He sees in his inspired consciousness the subjects announced as already in existence. He smites a country with the rod of his mouth, and again by his powerful words he delivers it. God communicates to him the message, and he cannot but announce it. No summit of Helicon or Parnassus raises him nearer to the skies. No Castalian fountain, no gushing waters of Pimplea poured forth in never ceasing abundance, moisten his sacred lips. On the top of Zion he inhales the air of heaven, and drinks in the celestial gale. Or else it is the heavenly fire from God's own altar that warms him. Seraphs lay upon his lips the purifying flame, and the illuminating Spirit enlightens and animates his soul. The "holy man" is stirred by God himself, and speaks "as he is moved by the Holy Ghost."

From this view of the origin of Scriptural prophecies, it might reasonably be supposed that the manner in which they are presented to us in the Bible, would not be in all respects similar to that of compositions in general, whether sacred or otherwise. And this is true. If, therefore, the prophetic declarations appear occasionally obscure and abrupt—if the language in which they are imbodied is sometimes hyperbolical—if they are expressed in symbols or enigmatical allegories—if to us they often seem

to be disconnected—if different and widely separated events are brought together—if transitions from one fact or class of facts to another are discernible—and if other peculiarities which we cannot easily, or perhaps at all, explain, are thought to be perceived; all these circumstances would afford no valid ground of objection to their divine origination. The peculiar nature of this department of revelation may make all these peculiarities not only consistent with it, but most expedient. The true lesson to be learned, therefore, is the duty of religious and cautious investigation, of attentive examination of the history and language of the Bible in general, and also of the history of God's church, and the bearing of secular events on its condition and character, in order that we may be the better prepared to form a judgment respecting any particular portion which it may be our intention and desire to understand.

The divine origin of Scriptural prophecy affords a sure indication of its truth. This is obvious from the essential character of its author: "God is not a man, that he should lie." Truth is his very nature, and "he cannot deny himself." Falsehood or error cannot possibly proceed from him: "no lie is of the truth." Deceit characterizes the source of imposition, the Devil; and we know that in various ages and countries his priests and priestesses have availed themselves of the credulity of ignorant

and fanatical devotees, to secure for themselves and their caste honors and dignities and wealth. Unprincipled deceit has trampled on simplicity. Yes, and to the shame of Christian ecclesiastics it must be confessed, that villany and fraud have sometimes lurked within the folds of the sacerdotal garb, and that priests of the church have enriched themselves by selling "lies in the name of the Lord;" priests of the church, I mean, by outward calling, but "ministers of Satan," though, like him who chose and ordained them, they may have appeared as "angels of light." Not thus "spake" those "holy men of old, who were moved by the Holy Ghost." Gazing at the truth, fully imbued with the truth, commissioned by the very Truth, they delivered to mankind nothing but truth. "If we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater."

It is hardly necessary to remark, that, if the prophecies of Scripture are divine in their origin, they must be of the very highest importance. Infinite wisdom neither plans nor executes anything in vain. If the ordinary results of God's providence are always directed and influenced by this principle, much more must those be which proceed from peculiar interpositions. If holy men have spoken to their weak and sinful brethren truths communicated by the source of truth, it were preposterous to imagine that their communications can be

wanting in interest and importance. If God utters his voice, we may be sure that it must be "a mighty voice," and reasonably expect that "all the earth will keep silence before him." Let man, whom he addresses, attentively and reverently listen, and in his inmost soul let him feel the spirit of the supplication, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

DISCOURSE II.

PROPHECY: ITS INCREASING DEVELOPMENT AND CERTAINTY.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy.—2 Peter i. 19.

A favorite objection urged by infidel writers against the reality and truth of inspired prophecy, has ever been its supposed obscurity. 'Your pretended prophecies,' says the skeptic, are unintelligible. The defenders of their divine authority, and those who have undertaken to expound their meaning, prove the validity of the objection by their unsatisfactory theories and contradictory interpretations. Almost all the leading events that have marked the world's history, are found by one or another of these self-styled expositors in the symbolical and prophetic books. We are taught by different instructors to read, in the same luminous page, of Greece, or of Rome, Heathen or Papal—of Mohammedanism, or of the Reformation. The downfall and decay of Babylon, the second overthrow of Jerusalem, the conquest of Rome by the northern barbarians, the future judg-

ment and destruction of the finally impenitent, have all been elicited from the very same prophecy, and to the complete satisfaction of the writers, the last of whom demolishes the structure of the former, in order to found on the same site his own splendid building, which is doomed in its turn to crumble into dust, that the ground may be cleared for another equally permanent superstructure. Antiochus, Nero, Domitian, Mohammed, the Pope, and Luther, have at various times appeared to various expositors standing out in bold relief in the very same niche of the prophetic temple, and to the eyes of the diversified beholders each as clear and bright as the noon-day.' Hence it is sagely inferred that documents, the contents of which admit such varied and contrary expositions, cannot be relied on with any certainty, and therefore cannot possibly have emanated from God.

Now the objection, which at first view carries along with it no little plausibility, loses sight of two very important considerations.

In the first place, it does not consider that, among the multitude of writers on the prophetic books, very few are in any good degree competent to the task which they have undertaken to perform. They are in general either too little acquainted with the world's history, or (as is more frequently the case), with the nature, scope, characteristics, and language of

Scriptural prophecy; or else they come to its study and exposition under the influence of a strong preconceived bias to some favorite and cherished system; and very often both causes combine to secure incompetency in the expositor. It will be obvious to any one who reflects, that these causes may readily lead a man to see in the prophetic volume any events or personages with which his mind is already filled, others more likely to have been intended by the Spirit being either unknown to him, or lost sight of, wholly or in part, by reason of the halo of glory with which his own imagination has encircled those which he has been accustomed to regard with undivided attention. The same remark is applicable in a greater or less degree to doctrinal views, but perhaps most of all to prophetic, wherein theories and hypotheses exercise unlimited influence on the ardent mind of an aspirant for fame in some untrodden region of investigation.

The objection errs, too, in assuming a mistaken view of prophecy. It supposes that divine predictions must be as plainly exhibited in the sacred volume as histories or biographies or prominent doctrines, and that the details must be all full and complete; so that, when rightly understood, the prophetic declarations become historical narratives, and like exact miniature portraits, delineate every feature and lineament of the original with the nicest accu-

racy. But this is unreasonable in itself, and unfounded in fact. With some most striking exceptions, prophecy does not go into particular detail. It contents itself with presenting leading characteristics and general descriptions; much of which may apply, and some of which may have been intended to apply, to a series of events or a line of personages, closely connected indeed in the mysterious and providential agency of God in his dealings with men, and yet, to ordinary human view, disjoined and widely separated both in the time and place of their existence and action. The true and full meaning, therefore, of prophetic announcements can only be learned by aid of the gradual developments of God's kingdom, as it advances to stability and perfection.

This truth, it is believed, is imbodied in the words of the text. It is my purpose to lay before you some prominent views respecting its meaning, with such remarks as the apostle's proposition may suggest.

St. Peter describes the "word of prophecy" as "more sure." Does he intend to institute a comparison with some other ground of appeal or test of truth? Embarrassed by difficulties which attend such a supposition, several old and able expositors have suggested that the comparative degree must not be strictly regarded, and that we may consider the language either as a declaration of the *positive* certainty

of the proposition, or that prophecy affords absolutely the *most* certain criterion of divine revelation. In opposition to both views it may be said, that they are not sufficiently sustained by good usage of scriptural language. In the latter case, the comparative could not properly be employed, unless every other evidence were inferior to that mentioned, which is not true; and in the former, it could not rightly be used in the connection in which it stands. Neither can any reason be given why the writer should employ language in itself unfit to convey the thought intended, and very likely to mislead the reader.

The apostle asserts the divine truth and vast importance of the gospel, and speaks of the "powerful coming of Christ." He gives in a few words the leading evidence of this, namely, miracles and prophecy, introducing it by the remark, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables." Hence it has been thought, that, in the words of the text, he sets the "*more* sure word of prophecy" in contradistinction to those "*cunningly devised* fables" on which impostors in all ages have attempted to found their systems. The opposition would undoubtedly be strikingly correct. The prophetic declaration on which the Christian relies, is the declaration of God. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The oracles of the heathen, and all other such claims to

divine inspiration, are either the artful deception of the devil, or the crafty schemes of his emissaries; and they bear on their very face the impress of fable and pretence, thus proving the legitimacy of their diabolical descent. Still, however, it does not seem sufficiently weighty for the very important connection in which the passage stands, to speak of God's prophetic declarations as "surer" than Satanic imposition or hypocritical wickedness. It is possible, indeed, that by a figure of speech whereby less is said than intended, such may be the apostle's idea. It is possible that he may say, *our* "prophecy" is "surer" than *their* "fable;" meaning at the same time that the fable is a lie, the offspring of its father, the devil, and that the prophecy is the most genuine certainty, proceeding verily from the immaculate and holy and necessarily true One, whose nature is entirely, that is, infinitely and eternally and essentially, the antagonism of deceit or error. Such language abounds in holy scripture. And it shows us, how immeasurably removed from human feelings of weakness, imperfection or doubt, is the Spirit which indited its sacred instructions, in the calm and dignified simplicity both of manner and language with which it clothes its sublime, its heavenly originated and heavenly guiding doctrines. Still, it is not easy to say why the apostle should limit his contrast to the prophetic "word," when

it certainly applied with equal force to the miraculous evidence, of which the "voice that came from heaven," mentioned by him in this same connection, is so remarkable a type.

But it may be said: "allowing that the apostle's antithesis does not lie in the comparison of true prophecy with lying fable; what is more natural and more intimately associated with the context, than the interpretation which makes him compare prophecy with miracles as the more reliable standard of the truth of divine revelation. 'The voice from heaven we heard,' indeed, 'in the holy mount,' but 'we have also the *more* sure word of prophecy.' The miracles we admit and rely on; but we recognize the 'word of prophecy' as stronger and surer evidence." In reference to this view of the meaning of the text, allow me to offer a few reflections.

It appears exceedingly improbable that the apostle would compare the value of two kinds of evidence, either of which is in itself abundantly sufficient to prove the divine origin of the gospel revelation. Nothing of the sort appears elsewhere in the Bible, which stands firm in the consciousness of its own divinity, content with the demonstration which appears in its own character, and in the influence of its doctrines on the hearts and lives of those who embrace them. Neither is it possible to establish such a principle to any practical purpose. The influ-

ence of different sorts of evidence depends much on circumstances, association, diversity of natural and mental character, of education, training and habits. What would be most convincing to one would fail to give satisfaction to another. Besides, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to show that the evidence from prophecy is really in itself more weighty and certain than that from miracles. For the reason just alleged, it were idle to attempt such a demonstration; and for this very cause, it would seem equally idle to imagine that the point were settled by the inspired authority of the text. Indeed, it has frequently been said, on the contrary, that the evidence of the miracles of our Lord and his apostles must have been overwhelming and irresistible, and therefore that the proof of Christianity cannot be so strong to us, as it was to those of that age who were eye-witnesses of the mighty works. But the soundness of such reasoning may well be questioned. Before such a conclusion can be drawn, several important points must be settled which involve no little difficulty, and admit of considerable argument on either side, and on which men of acuteness and information have entertained opposite opinions. What constitutes a miracle? Is it an operation out of the course of nature? But who can determine what the course of nature is? Who dares to claim a full knowledge of all nature's ordinary laws? Will it be said,

as an amendment to the definition, out of the course of nature as known by us? Then the miracle of one age becomes the simple operation of the better informed and more successful experimenter of the next, and the youth's amusement or child's play, of some subsequent one.

Again, the characteristics of a miracle being settled, it will still remain to be asked: May not the senses be deceived? This is not at all uncommon. And then, is there any necessary connection between such stupendous external operations, and the proposition that certain moral and religious truths inculcated by those who perform them are of divine origin, and promulged by divine command? And, admitting such either necessary or divinely imposed connection, and also that the works referred to were really miraculous, the point is still to be settled, were they wrought by "the finger of God," or by the influence of powerful spirits hostile to his will and purposes? If the benevolent character of the works be appealed to in support of the former alternative, may it not be replied, that "the old serpent," whose cunning is proverbial, may have transformed himself into an angel of temporary mercy to advance his own cause in his own diabolical way? that he may, in a comparatively few instances, have done good in order the more effectually to secure unbounded and permanent evil? The opinion now, and for many years most prevalent,

is that which limits the performance of miracles to God. But this was far from being the general sentiment in the first ages, either of Jews or Christians. It was believed that "Beelzebub" could "cast out demons," and perform mighty works out of and beyond the ordinary course of nature. If, then, we give to these and other similar considerations their due weight, we shall see that miracles, and those even which were marked by an apparently godlike benevolence, might fail to convince a prejudiced, uninformed and irreligious mind of the truth of a system wholly adverse to a long-cherished theory, in which personal worldly aggrandizement and national vanity and pride were most deeply interested. On the other hand, the gradual development of God's providence and grace, in perfect accordance with prophetic intimations, announcements and promises, must strengthen the influence of divine truth in the thoughtful and examining mind, and add such accumulated weight to the importance of the sure word of prophecy, as the contemporaries of our Lord and his apostles could not possibly have been able to estimate, and consequently could not have felt. On the one side of the question it may be said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead;" and on the other, "Prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see and have not seen

them, and to hear the things which ye hear and have not heard them."

The most probable exposition would seem to be that which is both the simplest and also the most natural meaning of the original terms. "We have the prophetic word" (or discourses, the singular being taken in a comprehensive sense,) "the surer;" that is, prophecy has become to us stronger, its evidence is now more satisfactory and conclusive than it formerly was. This view of the text conveys a plain and indubitable truth. When the apostle wrote, not a few of the obscurities of prophecy had already been cleared up; many of the types and symbols of former dispensations had been accomplished; historical events had placed in bright light predictions which before were dim and obscure; the coming of Christ, the circumstances connected with it, the events of his life, death, resurrection, ascension, the spreading of his kingdom, and the evident indications of the overthrow of his enemies; all these conspired to demonstrate the truth of Old Testament predictions, by strengthening the evidence that they were dictated "by the Holy Ghost." If history is the interpreter of prophecy, the comment had been already stamped on the world's page, making the once obscure text intelligible and clear.

Thus understood, the language of St. Peter conveys a most important truth: the full mean-

ing of prophecy displays itself in the gradual progress of human events. The providence of God produces, disposes, controls and modifies those facts and circumstances which present themselves to man's observation, which his omniscient eye had foreseen, and which his Spirit had foretold. The beautiful figure by which the apostle illustrates his statement and urges attention to his very important theme, confirms the correctness of the exposition. "We have the prophetic declarations which become surer, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." The comparison is evidently suggested by what is said in the book of Proverbs respecting the religious man's path: "It shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The morning begins to break from out the Cimmerian darkness that envelops half the world. The faint blushes of dawn gradually steal over the death-like slumber of the misty east, and pale the glimmerings of the stars. Every moment the horizon brightens. The objects of earth that lay in dark, confused, and undistinguishable shapelessness, begin to loom out from amid the heavy dull mass, and to assume renewed forms of beauty or of grandeur. At length the light-bringer, the day's own God-appointed ruler, walks from his royal chamber, beaming benevolence, and radiating healthful splendor on the

subjects of his vast domain. The prolific morning sheds a brightness on the happiness of her children, every one of whose lineaments she marks with fresh clearness and draws out in evident and beautiful proportion, to the enraptured and grateful delight of all who are blessed with the eye to behold them.

Thus also it is with divine prophecy. At first it is vague and obscure. General promises of benefit or threats of evil may be perceived, but the particulars of the gratuity or penal infliction are not discernible. Implicit faith is required on this ground, that the promiser and threatener is the God of truth, the Being whose infinite excellence is shown in this, that there is one thing which he is unable to do: "HE CANNOT LIE." But the world's history is unrolled, every page and every line marked by the handwriting of Him who sees the end from the beginning; and, as the letters on the scroll become legible, "the word of prophecy" becomes clearer and clearer, until at last its truthfulness and certainty and demonstrated divinity shine forth in such dazzling illumination, that the simple and sincere inquirer falls down to worship the omniscient and benevolent One, who has been pleased to establish truth by thus developing truth.

Viewed in this light, the words of the text suggest reflections in an almost unlimited degree. But our time at present will not permit

us to develop the thoughts which they contain. We must content ourselves with admiring the beauty and promise of the bud. The brilliancy and fragrance of the perfectly unfolded flower must be reserved in hope rather than enjoyed in present gratification. Let me, however, venture to suggest one caution, and to lay down one principle.

If prophecy were originally like a glimmering light, endeavoring to penetrate the gloomy recesses of some obscure place, it would be absurd to suppose that in the early very dark periods and localities, it could have shed a full splendor on the regions of divine truth. The caution, therefore, which I would suggest, is this: not to presume that, because we, living in the meridian blaze of the gospel's light, have clear and definite ideas of its system, the same may be said of our patriarchal fathers. If so, where would be the truth of our Saviour's assertion, "Many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that ye see, and have not seen them?" And yet there is scarcely a more common error. Listen to one authorized proclaimer and expositor of divine revelation, and he will tell you that our first parents knew well the whole series of consequences resulting to the race, which would follow their transgression of that positive law which God had imposed upon them. Ask him for his proof, and he has nothing to say, except that, in his judgment, it is reasonable so

to think. But in the judgment of others, it is quite unreasonable; and on such a speculative point, the Bible says not one word. Look into the admired pages of some distinguished commentator, and you will read that, immediately after the fall, the promise of a divine Redeemer was plainly announced to our progenitors, and received by them with a true Christian faith; that they knew and embraced the doctrines of Messiah's divinity, atonement and intercession, and looked for the constant aids of the Holy Spirit, to apply the full consolation of these doctrines to their souls. He will tell you, also, that when, after the expulsion from Eden, the first-born of the human family gladdened the heart of his mother, she expressed her joy at the event in language which even the fullest knowledge of the union of the divine with the human nature in the Saviour would hardly warrant; avowing her belief that by the birth of her son she had become the mother of "the very Jehovah!"* But the promise is enveloped in the darkness of figure. It merely declares that the progeny of the woman shall crush the life-seat of the enemy. On the manner, the time, the circumstances, it maintains a profound silence. On what ground, then, is such a theory built? On none other than an unproved tradition.

So, again, the same class of interpreters un-

* See Parkhurst's Heb. Lex. under atha, vii. 1, Note †.

hesitatingly affirm that God had respect to Abel's offering, because it was an animal victim, and consequently recognized the offerer's faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, self-renunciation, and dependence on the sole merits of that Divine Redeemer who was to come into the world, and to die as an expiation for human sin. Cain's, on the contrary, was rejected, because by preferring the fruits of the ground, he refused the one only atonement, showed his infidel character, and, to use the language of one of the most distinguished of this school, that he "had apostatized from the faith of a *divine*, but *suffering and dying Saviour*, and consequently was the first of DEISTS."* But the Scripture uniformly and invariably assigns one reason, and only one, for the rejection of the elder brother's offering, and the acceptance of that of the younger. The latter "offered a more excellent sacrifice than" the former, because he offered it "in faith." Cain's "works were evil, and his brother's righteous."† Inspiration assigns no other reason than this: the one was a religious, holy man, living by faith; the other was "of that wicked one," as appeared by the shocking fact, that he "slew his brother." Even if the divine origin of animal and other sacrifices be admitted, as seems to be the most probable theory, we are still uninformed whether their typical character was understood

* Parkhurst under noach, ad fin. † Heb. xi. 4. 1 John iii. 12.

by the primitive family of the human race, and consequently cannot argue from the affirmative that the one brother accepted and the other rejected the doctrine of an atoning Redeemer. That Abel's faith was manifested by the choice of a living victim rather than the productions of the ground, may be very true, but it is all assumed; and the sacred narrative most naturally suggests to the reader, that each brother presented to the Lord what his own care had nurtured and perfected in the employment to which he had devoted himself. How minutely the early patriarchs were acquainted with the truths which "the gospel has brought to light," we cannot tell. In such circumstances, it is wisest to decide nothing, as in such cases positive assertions are an affectation of knowledge which merely displays ignorance. The caution therefore suggested by the subject is this: not to make our own Christian knowledge the criterion and standard of the religious knowledge of preceding periods. The prophetic word has become stronger and clearer.

The principle which I would submit to your serious consideration, as involving a most imperative duty, and in perfect harmony with the statement of the text, is this: Prophecy already fulfilled contains a sufficient warrant for our faith in the truth and certainty of what is yet to be accomplished.

Both have emanated from the same source.

The former class demonstrates its divinity; the latter most rightfully commands our faith in it. That certain predictions were uttered and recorded hundreds of years before the corresponding events took place, and when no created sagacity could possibly foresee their coming, is capable of demonstration. The fall of existing empires, however magnificent and seemingly firm—the establishment of others with marked and distinct characteristics—the coming of a divine One, long promised and expected, comprehending who and what he should be—the ruin and dispersion in various parts of the world of God's once covenant people—are very evidently recorded in some of the most ancient books of the Old Testament. And, in agreement with the record, the events have taken place. If, then, the same record contain predictions the meaning and application of which we cannot discern, this is no reason for inferring their untruth, or even their doubtfulness. We may not be able to understand them. We may have failed to observe the facts and circumstances to which they relate. The things themselves may yet lie darkly covered in the unknown, mysterious future, and the time be yet to come when they shall burst into life and being, and throw light on the early predictions of ages lost in the remote past. In any case they are certain, and ought to be admitted with

an implicit faith; "for the word of the Lord hath spoken" them.

The soundness of the principle is incontrovertible, for the Scripture does itself appeal to it. I confine myself to the language of Isaiah: speaking in the person of God, he says, "Behold the former things are come to pass!" Here is a plain appeal to the candor and observation of his hearers, and it is immediately followed by the declaration, "New things do I declare." That "the former" had taken place is a guarantee for the reality of those "new things" which he immediately refers to. And soon after: "Who, as I, shall declare it and set it in order, since I appointed the ancient people? Have I not told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses." This is intended, as the context plainly shows, to strengthen the faith of God's people in what had just before been predicted. And again: "I have declared the former things from the beginning, and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass, I showed it thee."* I admit that the connection in which these words stand proves that the chief design of the prophet is to satisfy his people, that the predictions he mentions originated with the true God, and not

* Isa. xlii. 9. xliv. 7, 8. xlviii. 5, 6.

with their stupid and brutish idols. But still it is quite evident that he appeals to the accomplishment of some as affording abundant reason for putting full reliance on other prophetic announcements and promises yet to be realized.

The practical lesson which the whole subject of the text inculcates is this: that we cherish gratitude to God, for the accomplishment of so much of his divine prophetic word as we are able distinctly to trace out and perceive in past events, or in the present state of mankind; and that, in suitable humility and faith, we sit, like docile children, at the Father's feet, endeavoring to observe and embrace the intimations of his will, in such predictions as are still to receive, in a greater or less degree, their complete accomplishment.

DISCOURSE III.

PROPHECY: ITS INCREASING DEVELOPMENT AND CERTAINTY CONTINUED.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star (or sun) arise in your hearts.—2 Peter i. 19.

In a former discourse on the first clause of this verse, I endeavored to explain its true meaning as illustrative of the nature of divine prophecy, showing that its developments are gradual in their advancement to perfect clearness; and that thus, in the progress of human events, prophecy becomes plainer in its meaning and necessary application, and surer as a test of revealed truth. I concluded, by suggesting a useful caution, and inculcating an important principle. As the subject brought into notice by the apostle's statement could be but very imperfectly considered in a single discourse, it is my present purpose to develop it somewhat more at large.

The latter part of the text presents the strongest motive for so doing; for it implies the pro-

priety and advantage of paying the closer attention to predictions, as their bearing and truth become the more conspicuously evolved. The apostle teaches, that it is "well to take heed unto the prophetic word, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the morning star (or sun) arise in your hearts;" that is, until, by obtaining a clear knowledge of its meaning, and a right appreciation of its practical character, you become thoroughly enlightened and sanctified; "rooted and grounded in the faith," and rejoicing therein with thanksgiving.

In tracing out the application of St. Peter's description of prophecy, let us confine ourselves to one leading topic. I refer, of course, to what will ever be to Christians, and ought to be to all men, the most important; namely, the predictions of a deliverer of the human race from the natural and threatened effects of man's original transgression. An induction of particulars will show how strikingly apposite are the apostle's statement and comparison.

The very first promise of a Redeemer was addressed to the tempter himself in the very moment of his seeming triumph, and is a continuation of the threat of curse denounced against him, which had preceded it: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* It

* Gen. iii. 15.

is not my purpose to examine the different views, arising out of the different translations of the original, which at various times have been proposed. No other version is needed, and probably no better can be made, than that of our English Bible. In endeavoring to elicit the ideas which our unhappy parents would have attached to the prophecy, we must regard it as entirely isolated from every subsequent development of its significancy, either as contained in other parts of the Bible, or as made evident by historical accomplishment. We can have nothing to guide us but the words themselves, and the occasion and circumstances in connection with which they were uttered. Adam and Eve stood before their offended Maker and Judge. The justice of his character appears in the very fact, while his mercy is not obscurely intimated by the previous remark, that he came "in the cool of the day." The tempter is also present. The culprits are examined, and all three sentenced. Whether, in effecting the temptation, the devil had assumed the form, or whether he is himself described under the figure, of a serpent, is a question which my present purpose does not require me to discuss.* One thing is certain, that the prominent subject of the curse is the Devil, Satan, the old Serpent and Dragon, as he is elsewhere called;† and the language of the

* Note IV.

† John viii. 44. Rev. xii. 9. 13–17. 2 Cor. xi. 3.

curse is plainly borrowed from the forms and nature of the man and of the reptile. The seed or progeny of the woman is her descendants; the progeny of the Serpent, or Devil, comprehend all who are like him in temper and disposition, and whose interests are identified with his, that is to say, all incorrigibly wicked men and evil angels. The crushing of the head and heel refers obviously to the degree of injury to be sustained by the respective parties. As the head is regarded as the seat of life, the assailing and crushing of it express complete destruction of vital energy, entire defeat and prostration of the adversary. The opposite phrase conveys, of course, the idea of injury comparatively trifling. It does not appear, therefore, that anything could be discerned by our fallen parents in the first promise more than what may be thus expressed: the tempter is condemned to a condition of utter degradation and servility; perpetual enmity between his race and that of the woman is to exist; although he shall be permitted to injure the latter in an inferior degree, yet in the end it shall completely destroy his energy and power.* How this great result was to be brought about, by what means it was to be done, when its most striking development was to take place, and various other most important and interesting questions connected with the subject, we may answer satisfactorily

* Note V.

by the assistance of subsequent predictions and facts; but the written word of the original promise imparts no other information than that already stated. It contains, indeed, the germ of the whole gospel; but when first announced, it lay, as it were, buried in the dark earth, awaiting its gradual bursting out and progressive growth and expansion, in "the fulness of time" which its divine planter had fixed. I say, that if we form our judgment simply on the circumstances of the occasion and the meaning of the words, we can see no more than a very general promise couched in figurative expressions. If we bring as exegetical aid, any supposed divinely communicated information made to our first parents which is not comprehended within the written word, we assume what it were indeed presumption positively to deny, but at the very least equal presumption to maintain. We venture to make a most important affirmation, in a matter of which we are profoundly and utterly ignorant. Our truest wisdom here is to confess that we know nothing, and can assume nothing beyond the record which declares, "thus saith the Lord."

Let us now proceed to the next generally acknowledged promise of deliverance from the original curse.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, in consequence of certain divine communications, re-

moved to the land of Canaan. The second* recorded communication was accompanied by a benediction which concludes in the words, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."† The promise herein contained, is several times on various occasions repeated, and subsequently in language somewhat more definite, "in thy seed" being substituted for "in thee." This promise is in the New Testament distinctly explained of Christ,‡ and thus also it seems to be alluded to in one of the Psalms and in Zechariah.§ The terms, in thy *seed*, would naturally remind the patriarch of the original promise, that the *seed* of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; and he would receive, moreover, the gratifying intelligence, that the triumphant victory was to be achieved principally at least through one or more of his descendants. It was signal benediction, involving the promise of favor to all mankind by means of the patriarch's posterity. But this is all that the text in itself authorizes us to affirm.

Let it be observed, that I do not deny that Abraham himself may have been in a condition, which would enable him to take a more comprehensive view of these words. Indeed, we have good reason to think that this was the case. We know from the patriarchal history

* Note VI. † Gen. xii. 5.
‡ Acts iii. 25, 26. Gal. iii. 8, 9, 14, 16, 29.
§ Ps. lxxii. 17. Zech. xiv. 17.

the sincerity and depth of his religious character, the firmness of his faith, and the strength and fulness of his obedience. We may therefore infer that the knowledge of divine truth which, by the grace of God, produced such results, could not have been very limited; and this inference is confirmed by the authority of the New Testament. It is not unreasonable to believe, that "the friend of God" received other divine manifestations than those recounted in his sacred biography. It is not improbable that the offering of Isaac may have been accompanied by communications relating to the scheme of redemption through Christ, far in advance of the religious knowledge then existing among the great body of the pious. But we cannot affirm this, much less make it the ground of our interpretation. We must confine ourselves to the legitimate sense of the words, as expounded by what we know to have been the religious character of the times and of the parties directly interested, if we would determine accurately, according to the measure of knowledge attainable by us, just how far such "prophetic word" would have illumined the then pervading darkness. We have no right to concentrate on the obscure prediction the ever increasing light of all future declarations, even the completeness of gospel illumination. The view thereby presented is no doubt the living reality of the picture, but the light thus

cast upon it was wanting to the age in which it was first produced; which, consequently, was not in a condition to get any more than an imperfect glimpse of the beautiful and magnificent region which it delineated.

Before I proceed, allow me to interrupt the course of argument by interposing one remark. It would be a fundamental error to suppose that we, who are favored with the fulness of divine revelation, and who have the comment on early prophecies which is afforded by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, should not avail ourselves of all those sacred helps in ascertaining the full meaning of former predictions. Doubtless the later communications must be employed in illustrating the earlier. But my present purpose is to consider prophecy as it is in itself; as it was imperfectly, slowly, in a fragmentary manner as I may say, and after long intermissions, communicated by God in successive ages, always imbodying indeed one great truth, but developing it with more or less obscurity, or, if you will, clearness, according to circumstances. With this caution, we may venture to proceed in illustrating the Apostle's idea.

Omitting, therefore, certain indirect allusions to the main subject, we pass on to the language of the dying Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from be-

tween his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."*

This text has been subjected to a multitude of interpretations, through the perversity of prejudice, and the accommodation of criticism to theory and imagination. Omitting them all as unworthy of notice in the present connection, I confine myself to two, both of which may very plausibly be defended. Many of the wisest, most learned, and orthodox interpreters regard the word Shiloh as equivalent to peacemaker. Thus the term will be synonymous with the phrase, "prince of peace," applied to the Messiah, and in harmony with the language of Micah, "this one shall be our peace," and the correspondent language of St. Paul, "he is our peace."† According to the other view, which is perhaps better supported, the term is a compound one, and the sentence elliptical, for, until he come whose (it is)—namely, the authority implied in the word sceptre, and recognized by the expectation of those to whom the prophecy was directed. This appears to be the view in which Ezekiel regarded the passage, if, as seems exceedingly probable, he has paraphrased it in the words, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more *until he come whose right it is.*"‡ Whichever of these two views may be preferred, the gene-

* Gen. xlix. 10. † Isa. ix. 5, 6. Mic. v. 4, 5. Eph. ii. 14.
‡ xxi. 32, (27.)

ral idea of the prophecy, as foretelling the coming of some extraordinary personage descended from Judah, will be the same. The only difference is, that in the one case the *peaceful* character of his government is made the most prominent consideration, and in the other the *right* and *justice* of his authority.*

This celebrated prophecy of Jacob is a much fuller development of the subject than any preceding one contained within the inspired record. Several particulars are contained in it which do not at all appear in the others. In the manifestations to Abraham, the blessing is promised through his posterity, and in the line of Isaac; here we are taught that it shall come through Judah, thus limiting the descent to one of the twelve brethren. Former revelations contained nothing beyond a general announcement of blessing to be derived through some patriarchal family; this develops the important truth, that a certain individual personage is to be the agent in dispensing it. It goes further; it represents this person as a great ruler, invested with rightful authority. And further still; it announces him as a universal commander, to whose standard even the nations shall gather, or to whom they will yield obedience. These are very important points of superiority. The prophetic word now begins to break forth with marked distinctness. The

* Note VII.

surrounding darkness begins to be dissipated, and the yet unseen orb of prophecy to emit considerable light. Let us continue to gaze until it rises in the murky atmosphere, and presents to our vision its full disk clearly defined.

Thus far, human conquest and triumph over the great adversary, by means of some distinguished individual to arise in the family of Judah, and to become the benefactor of mankind, the establisher of universal peace, and the ruler of all, comprise the sum and substance of the prophecies relating to the Messiah which are comprehended in the Hebrew history. I purposely omit any notice of Mosaic institutions, whether relating to things, characters, or places, inasmuch as they have no direct bearing on the topic under consideration, which is to trace the gradual development of this divine truth, not to show how much of it was wrapped up in type and symbol. I omit also the celebrated prophecy of Balaam, because it is quite possible to restrict its exposition to David without any apparent unfairness, although analogy is opposed to such a limitation. The repeated law* of the divinely inspired legislator, supplies us with another prediction of the personality of the great deliverer, and represents him also in a new character. Be-

* Deut. xviii. 15 et seq. This is the meaning of the title of the last book of the Pentateuch, both in Greek and Hebrew.

fore, he had appeared as universal autocrat, swaying uncontrolled authority, and receiving the homage of the nations. Now, he comes before us as the great instructor, God's own commissioned teacher of his people: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me."

This promise, which the man of God develops at length, is in the New Testament explained of the Messiah. He is *the* prophet, the divinely commissioned instructor, taught, guided, and sustained by Jehovah, to teach the erring and sinful people the way of life. This prophet is to be raised up from among his brethren, not merely his brethren of mankind, but his Hebrew brethren. He is to be like Moses, favored with special and direct communications from heaven. He is to promulgate the commands of God. The severest threatenings are denounced against all who shall presumptuously refuse to hear his instructions. The promise of such a divine agent and teacher is made indeed to the Hebrew people; but, like many others in the sacred volume, is also intended to embrace within the comprehensive circle of its blessings, all the people of the earth. The *royal* office of the Messiah had been already proclaimed in the dying rapture of Jacob, and perhaps the prediction of Balaam did but re-echo the well-known prophetic voice. Here,

the great *teacher* is brought forward; the revealer of the profound secret, inscrutable to man, however deeply interested and desirous to penetrate the mystery, the secret of the reconciliation and access of the sinner to the pure and holy God. Here is contained the gracious and soul-satisfying promise of the future coming of him who should "bring life and immortality to light," who is himself the true "light" and the very "truth."

It were unworthy of the sincerity which should always mark the duties of this sacred place, were I to pass unnoticed the objection which has been urged against explaining this passage in Deuteronomy as a promise of the Messiah. It is indeed so applied in the New Testament. But, say some objectors, this is simply by accommodation; or, say others, through inadvertence, or want of right knowledge of its meaning, or an inclination to apply predictions and representations of the Old Testament writers to the Messiah. Now, my dear young friends, let me say to you, and let me request you to bear it in mind, that nothing is easier than to ascribe to a comprehensive accommodation what is not understood; or to question the right knowledge of those whose views we are incompetent to appreciate, and even to assume their incapacity and ignorance. The boy may undervalue and despise the instructions of the man, as is very common, and

indeed natural, from the almost invariable union of ignorance and conceit. It cannot be questioned, however, that the connection in which the promise stands requires a more extended application of it than that which limits the meaning to Messiah, as the predicted religious teacher of mankind. The Hebrew lawgiver has just been warning his people against the contagious evil of the surrounding idolatry, of consulting for any purposes those who pretended to have intercourse with spirits, and of any attempts by such means to acquire knowledge, and to pry into futurity. Then he introduces the language under review: "These nations hearkened unto observers of times and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." And, after repeating the declaration, and threatening those who would disregard the divine teaching of this prophet, he goes on to say, in the person of God: "But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, shall die." And, to make the connection still clearer, a test is immediately subjoined, whereby a true prophet may be distinguished from an impostor: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spo-

ken; the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously." It is evident, then, that Moses intends to satisfy the Israelites of the incongruity and wickedness of appealing to false methods of acquiring what is unknown, and to direct them to the only reliable source, by assuring them that, as occasion might require, the true God would raise up the true prophet; in other words, that they should never want a succession of prophets, inspired and directed in a greater or less degree like himself, to teach them "the true and the right way."

But does this view of the passage preclude its application to the Messiah? Certainly not. It only shows, that of the whole line of prophets, he was always the life and the soul; and that the prediction of the mass comprehended also the prediction of the individual who communicated animation and vitality to every part. Any true prophet whom God might at any time raise up among the Hebrews, is doubtless intended; but the prophet of prophets, the prophet foreseen, predetermined, without whom there could never have been any true prophet at all, and who spake in the inspiration of each, is the prominent and leading burden of this prediction of Moses.

Thus does the prophetic word become surer and clearer, as it gradually advances in the Pentateuch towards the full light of day. From a general, indefinite promise of restora-

tion and benediction, it opens before us the royal and prophetic character of that distinguished personage, whose coming should confer peculiar honor on the tribe of Judah. And as we proceed in examining the prophetic page, the truth gains in perspicuity and distinctness. A royal seed is promised to David,* not merely his immediate descendant on the throne, or any other individual of his race, but a succession of kings, symbolizing the great Monarch, the chief Son of David, in whose universal supremacy the idea of the divinely established regal government of the Hebrews, is fully realized. Of this royal seed it is said: "He shall build a house for my name," a prediction which announces not merely the erection of the material national place of worship at Jerusalem, but also the "raising up" to God's glory of that grand moral, and religious, and intellectual temple, unconfined by any terrestrial locality, "the house of prayer for all nations," "the Lord's house," whose base is to be elevated "in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and unto" which "all people shall flow;" the Christian "church of the living God," which, commenced in this world, "groweth unto a holy temple," and shall be completed in full perfection by its almighty and infinite Builder in the world to come."

This ever-brightening series of predictions

* 2 Sam. vii.

relative to our spiritual deliverer, displays its character as delineated by the inspired pencil of St. Peter, most incontestably and abundantly in the Psalms and prophetic writings properly so called. The historical books of the Old Testament contain, as we have seen, the development of two of the leading offices of Messiah. The whole Hebrew system of divine services in the tabernacle and temple adumbrate, the third. But the 110th Psalm proclaims it most openly in the words: "The Lord sware, and will not repent, thou art a *priest* forever after the order (or rank, or likeness) of Melchisedek." Here we have the announcement of a sacrificial personage, far superior to the whole Levitical succession, and therefore represented as analogous to him who ranked above even the great patriarch Abraham himself, the "mighty prince among" the Hittites, the noble head and founder of the Hebrew nation, and, to crown all his honors in one most magnificent and yet most simple description of greatness, invested in the glory of which he of all mortals stands pre-eminent in lone conspicuity, "THE FRIEND OF GOD!"* A priest implies a *sacrifice*, and hence we read of the obedience and sufferings of this same personage in a different capacity, of his "bearing griefs and carrying sorrows" for men, of his being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" that

* Isa. xli. 8. James ii. 23.

"the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and" that "with his stripes we are healed;" that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, put him to grief," and made "his soul an offering for sin;" that he "bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*

Continuing to unroll the prophetic record, we are furnished with yet more particular predictions respecting this long promised Saviour. Unlike the great mass of prophecies, many of these are remarkable for their specific character and the definiteness of their statements. One prophet announces that God "will send his messenger to prepare the way, and that the Lord shall come to his temple." Another, the "man greatly beloved," is told by an angel despatched from heaven towards the end of the Babylonian Captivity, that within a period designated as "70 weeks" Messiah shall set up his eternal kingdom, put an end to Jewish "sacrifice and oblation," "bring in everlasting righteousness," and prepare "the most holy" place for the truest religious services, although in accomplishing these great objects he shall himself "be cut off." On the obscurity and indefiniteness of the period thus designated by Daniel, a ray of light is thrown by a subsequent prophet. Haggai predicts that the glory of the house of prayer and praise then in the progress of building shall exceed that of Solomon's, and the connec-

* Isa. liii.

tion shows, what the fact proves, that this glory is identical with the presence of the Messiah, who consequently was to come during the continuance of the second temple. The place of his birth is mentioned, and, as if it were intended to refute all suspicion of merely being a happy fortuitous coincidence, this honor is conferred on an obscure and insignificant village. That his appearance in human nature should be miraculous as the son of a virgin mother, and that he should be at the same time really divine, "the mighty God" of the universe, are plain statements of the inspired Isaiah. The lowliness of his character and condition as a man is several times depicted; once, with the striking circumstance so remarkably verified by his last entrance into Jerusalem, "lowly and riding on an ass," and yet, "O daughter of Zion, coming unto thee" as "thy king!" The simple and unostentatious manner in which he should proclaim his Father's message, and impart his heavenly doctrines, comforting the mourners, and cherishing the slightest indications of piety, is not forgotten in the prophetic delineations. The Messiah is represented as a public proclaimer of divine truth, one on whose "lips grace has been poured forth," who shall "preach righteousness, declare God's faithfulness and salvation, his loving-kindness and truth in the great congregation." He is announced as the vindicator of God's law, the lover of

righteousness, and, in consequence of this characteristic trait of his nature, as raised to an honorable distinction above all authorities and powers.* The spiritual character of the religion which he should introduce, in contradistinction to the predominant element of that which should give place to it, is often stated, and never with greater fulness and particularity than by the prophet Jeremiah, whose language is too remarkable to be omitted. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers; but I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. And they shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."† No comment can possibly be truer on this passage than that of the celebrated Jewish Rabbi, ABARBANEL: "This declaration shows, that, in the time of the future redemption, God will give to his people a new law, other and different from that which we have." This is a most memorable and candid avowal of the truth. How melancholy, that it should be immediately followed by a remark illustrative of most amazing prejudice and apathy. "But this is repugnant to the funda-

* Ps. xl. 9, 10. xlv. 2, 6, 7. † Jer. xxxi. 31 et seq.

mental principle which we believe, that the law is perpetual and immutable!" *

In conclusion, I have only time to make one single remark.

Briefly and imperfectly the rise and gradual development of scriptural prophecy relating to the Messiah has been presented to your consideration. The one is coeval with the fall. The other runs parallel with the whole period of revelation antecedent to the Christian, appearing in various forms and in various degrees of clearness, only becoming brighter and fuller, and more perfect as it advances. All, however, is perspicuous in announcing "good things to come;" and very much in declaring their spiritual nature, and consequently their accurate correspondence with the gospel. Here, then, is a problem for infidelity to ponder. To solve it on her principles is impossible. How can such a series of predictions be explained, except on the principle of divine influence and direction, both in its origination and in its continuance?

To this "more sure word of prophecy," then, "let us take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star (or sun) arise in our hearts."

* Note VIII.

DISCOURSE IV.

PROPHECY COMMUNICATED IN VARIOUS WAYS.

God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.—Heb. i. 1.

It has frequently been remarked that there exists, in many respects, a beautiful analogy between the works of God in nature and his revealed word in the sacred Scriptures. This truth confirms the evidence, arising from various sources, of the divine origin of the latter, inasmuch as it tends to show that such harmonious connection is to be traced to the same first cause. While each class of created things possesses the same general characteristics, the individuals composing it are so diversified that no two can be found exactly and in every minute particular alike. A similar uniformity and diversity may be seen in the methods by which it hath pleased the one infinite and eternal Wisdom to make known his revealed will. In illustration of the principle, it is sufficient for my present purpose to refer to the language of the text. "It is by the prophets" that divine com-

munications have been made to men; and yet, in such diversity of manner as comports with individual peculiarity and the circumstances of time and place: "At sundry times and in divers manners" hath God spoken.

The word "prophet," *in the text*, comprehends, no doubt, all the divinely inspired teachers of sacred truth who, in former dispensations, were commissioned to communicate the will of God to his people. It accords best, however, with my present purpose, to restrict its *application* to that class of men who were favored with some supernatural knowledge of future events. It is the design of this discourse to attempt to state some of the "divers manners" which were employed to impart this knowledge both to the prophet himself, and also to those whom he was authorized and directed to instruct.

The prophets are said to have *spoken* to the people, and we often read that God *spake* to the prophets. Yet, in neither case is it necessary to limit the meaning of the word to oral communication imbodied in human language. Thought may be conveyed by symbolic exhibition or action, with as much certainty and clearness as by oral utterance; and it is not to be doubted that "the father of our spirits" can communicate to his intelligent creatures, in very many ways beside this, with equal and probably much greater definiteness and perspicuity. Scripture frequently employs the phrases,

"God spake," and "God said," when it intends merely to denote the expression or the action of his will, in proof of which it is sufficient to refer to the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. And persons are said to employ certain language, when nothing more is intended than to put into definite forms of expression their inward emotions and dispositions. Thus Isaiah* represents the scornful rulers in Jerusalem as boasting of having "made a covenant with death" and being "at agreement with hell," of having "made lies their refuge and hid themselves under falsehood;" though it would be quite preposterous to suppose that they had actually, in such terms, openly avowed their own wickedness. It is freely conceded, therefore, that communication in words audibly heard by the natural human organ is not the necessary and invariable sense of the forms alluded to.

And yet in many such cases, no good reason can be alleged why this sense should not be given to the form, and in many also it seems impossible to understand it otherwise. It would be difficult, if not impracticable, adequately to explain, on any other theory, the sentence pronounced against our first parents, together with the promise connected therewith. The same remark would apply to several communications made to Abraham; to the interview of Moses

* xxviii. 14, 15.

with the God of his ancestors at the burning bush; most especially to his intercourse with the same divine Being on Mount Sinai, when the ten commandments were announced, and he spake with the Almighty "face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend." Other instances of the same method of divine revelation occur in the sacred narratives of the Old Testament. And the New also furnishes striking illustrations. The "voice from heaven" "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," which was heard by the Baptist, is explained most satisfactorily and most in harmony with other such facts solely on this supposition. The similar voice at the transfiguration, and that on a subsequent occasion, when the petition, "Father, glorify thy name," was immediately answered in the words, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again," ascribed by some of the bystanders to an angel,* are inexplicable on any other ground. The same may be said of the miraculous announcement from heaven to Saul of Tarsus, "Why persecutest thou me?" which his attendants heard, but probably did not understand,† as it was made "in the Hebrew tongue." And, after all the learned, not excluding the extravagant, disquisitions of Jewish and Christian writers, on the Urim and Thummim of the Hebrew priestly breastplate, and the mode in which divine answers were given

* John xii. 28–30. † Note IX.

thereby; the simplest theory is probably the best, namely, that when the High Priest put on the vestment in which were deposited the twelve precious stones, and applied for divine direction by means of the Urim and Thummim, the responses were orally communicated.*

It may be concluded, then, that God sometimes spake unto the prophets in an audible voice, and in this colloquial manner expressed his will to men. Occasionally, too, he appeared in human form, and, as a man, had intercourse with those whom he thus deigned to favor with his presence and blessing.

But it is not to be assumed that the visible and the audible combined, or even the audible alone, was the invariable, or indeed the most usual manner. That it was not invariable is certain from the express declaration of Scripture; and, from analogy and the nature of the thing, we infer that it is not probable that it was the most usual. We read that the divine will was conveyed in dreams. Ignorant fancies and weaknesses, which have so often led superstitious persons to ascribe to some divine promptings certain dreams, which, after all, were nothing but the result of natural influences, have served to cast an unjust suspicion on this, as one medium of supernatural divine communication. But the suspicion is unfounded. Man's want of knowledge, and his folly, may expose to

* Note X.

contempt what God's wisdom can sanctify and honor. We know so little of the soul, the thinking and feeling principle of our being, except in our daily wakeful and corporeal state, that we are wholly unable to say whether a condition of sleep may not, in certain conceivable circumstances, be as well adapted to the reception of a divine communication, as the opposite, or indeed even better. However this may be, it is certain that the ancients attached much importance to dreams,—often, however, I grant, through childish fear and superstition,—and that the Scripture is explicit in assuring us that, through this medium, divine truth was frequently imparted to God's holy prophets, and occasionally to certain individuals who cannot be classed among so sacred and venerated a body.*

Intimately connected with this method of conveying divine instruction or direction, yet of a less natural character, was that which the sacred Scriptures express under the name of VISION. A dream, however inexplicable by us may be its diversified phenomena, is nevertheless the natural result of a natural state of humanity in its present earthly condition. Although it may in several respects correspond with a vision, yet this always implies something more, something beyond the natural phenomena of present ordinary human existence.

* Note XI.

It is a peculiar state of the moral, sentient, and intellectual element of man, produced by divine influence; and therefore it must be well fitted for admitting divine communications. Hence prophetic announcements are called visions, sights, appearances, things seen; and the prophets themselves are called seers.* It would seem that the man of God who is to be the subject of such a communication, is brought into a peculiar condition both of body and mind. It may be that, in general, a very exalted degree of religious character is a necessary preliminary to such a condition, and also a certain calm, reflective, and spiritualized state of the whole man. I say, in general, for doubtless the Scriptures supply us with occasional instances of a different kind. In such a state of body and mind divine communications are made to the prophet. Sometimes they are conveyed to him in direct language, addressed to him in his preternatural condition, and are afterwards written down by him, for the use of those who were to be benefited by the revelation. Sometimes they are made by symbolical representations, known at the time to be expressive of the thing intended to be pointed out; as in the case of Daniel's *ram*, the well-known symbol of the Persian power, and of his *he-goat*, equally notorious as the representation of Greek or Macedonian impetuosity. Fre-

* Note XII.

quently the prophetic announcements are delineated in pictorial representations, when the prophet sees the future events delineated, and the graphical view is so impressed upon his inspired internal faculty, as to enable him to describe in language for the use of all subsequent ages the facts thus predicted.

I shall not attempt to show how this condition of the prophet was produced. Being quite different from that of the mind in its ordinary perceptive state, and also of a divine and miraculous character, the preliminary steps which led to it most probably varied according to circumstances. They were sometimes connected with preparatory training; at others the prophetic influence was poured forth without such discipline. It is reasonable to think that "there were diversities of operations," although "the same God" conducted and controlled all. Sometimes the prophet was at first deeply agitated and distressed, and afterwards calmed and soothed and strengthened, either by natural* or supernatural† means; so that his faculties were brought into a condition fit to receive the divine influence. It is both unreasonable and unscriptural to suppose that God's holy prophets were in a state of frenzied excitement, such as is said to have maddened the raving Sibyl. It is well remarked by an old and able writer on

* See 2 Kings iii. 15.

† Isa. vi. 5–8. Dan. x. 8, 10, 11, 15–19.

this subject, that "the prophetic spirit doth never alienate the mind, seeing it seats itself as well in the rational powers as in the sensitive, but always maintains a consistency and clearness of reason, and solidity of judgment where it comes; it doth not ravish the mind, but inform and enlighten it." And again: "The prince of darkness comes not within the sphere of light and reason to order affairs there, but that is left to the sole economy and sovereignty of the Father of lights. There is a clear and bright heaven in man's soul, in which Lucifer himself cannot subsist, but is tumbled down from thence as often as he essays to climb up into it."*

Although the prophet is placed in a suitable condition to receive divine communications, yet he sees and hears and feels and acts as he would have done in his natural condition; and therefore the Scripture often represents his views or actions, while in this state, by the very same language which it would have employed to describe them, had they taken place in historical reality during his ordinary natural condition. The account of St. Peter's deliverance from prison, as related in the twelfth chapter of the Acts, is a striking illustration of this. An angel appears to him, and rouses him from sleep. His chains fall off. At the command of his heavenly visitor, he clothes

* Smith's Discourses, in Jewish Rabbis, p. 230, note.

himself, and prepares for flight. He follows his guide without hesitation, passes the first and second wards, goes out of the prison through the iron gate into the city, and proceeds along one street. Then the angel departs, and the apostle perceives the true state of the case. Hitherto, and while all these facts were taking place, he did not know that they were realities, "but thought he saw a vision." In his own estimation, then, and according to his own perception, there was no apparent difference between actual transactions in his natural condition, and the representations and impressions which were made in vision. And doubtless it was thus also with the Old Testament prophet.* Whilst under the influence of the divine afflatus, it may seem to him that he has gone to some place, where he has remained a considerable time, and transacted certain business; that he has removed from one place to another; that he has married, and become the father of a family called by particular names. All these things appear to him as facts, and are also described as such. But in some cases we know with positive certainty that they could not have been actual realities in life, and therefore we may infer the same thing with regard to others, the evidence of which is less definite.

Let me illustrate this point by quotations from the prophet Ezekiel: "The hand of the

* Note XIII.

Lord God fell upon me; and the Spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me *in the visions of God*, to Jerusalem. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Dig now in the wall; and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in and behold the wicked abominations that they do there."* The prophet then proceeds to describe the various idolatries practised by the Israelites. Thus also in other subsequent portions of his prophecies. And yet Ezekiel was a captive in Babylonia, and it is certain that all this took place, not at Jerusalem, but near the river Chebar, and, as we are expressly told, in prophetic vision. The same method of representation most probably occurs also in Jeremiah, where he is said, in obedience to the divine direction, to go to the Euphrates, and to hide the girdle that he had previously put upon his loins within a hole of the rock, and after many days to go again, and to take the girdle from the place where he had hid it, and to find it marred and useless.† All this is symbolic, intended, as we read immediately afterwards, to show the corrupt state of the people, whom he had so closely connected with himself, and their consequent punishment and ruin. The same view may be taken of the marriage of

* Ezek. viii. 1, 3, 7–9. † Ib. xii. 1–7.

Hosea, and the children said to have been born to him; which, if understood literally, is encumbered by very serious difficulties, but if regarded as a parabolical representation, or as having taken place, not in real life, but merely in prophetic vision, is an apt illustration of the rejection of the Israelites for shameful infidelity to God, and of their subsequent repentance and reconciliation. The Old Testament contains many representations of this sort, important facts or truths being thus communicated. In this way, most probably, Moses was shown in the mount the pattern of the tabernacle, the graphical delineation of which was so impressed on his mind as to enable him to direct how the material tabernacle of the Hebrews should be made conformably. This is the most natural sense of the divine direction given to Moses, and repeated twice in the New Testament.* Thus, perhaps, did David discern the destroying angel standing over the threshing-floor of Araunah. Thus, too, did the disciple whom Jesus loved see the Apocalyptic wonders, in the Spirit, in a high state of the prophetic vision, not with bodily eye, but with mental and spiritual organ, purified, and cleared, and prepared for the extraordinary representations that ravished and entranced him. And thus also did the proto-martyr Stephen, while dying, exult in the vision that burst upon his illumi-

* Exod. xxv. 40. Acts vii. 44. Heb. viii. 5.

nated mind, of "the heavens opened, and" of "Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

Divine communications were very frequently made by the instrumentality of angels. It is unnecessary to specify instances. They occur so frequently that the most distinguished among the Jewish interpreters have laid it down as a principle, that an angel is always to be regarded as the medium of communication even in cases where such an agency is not mentioned.* But this is an unwarrantable inference, although it may apply in many cases where the sacred oracles are silent respecting the mode of conveyance. In all periods of prophetic illumination, from the patriarchal down to the apostolic, we read of the instrumentality of angels. Either they appeared in the human form and nature, and thus held converse with men in the same manner as men communicate with each other, or else they conveyed the purposes of God to the prophet in a dream or in his state of vision. The rationalistic notion, that the existence of such celestial beings, and of their occasional intercourse with men, is of Persian origin, and was engrafted on the old stock of Hebrew theology about the time of the Babylonian captivity, is a fiction, wholly unsupported by historic evidence, and equally inconsistent with a right view of the antiquity and authority of the earlier books of

* See Maimonides in Jewish Rabbies, pp. 231, 232, 235.

the Old Testament. In the writings of Daniel and St. Luke, an angel, who was commissioned with divine information, is mentioned by name, and, in the former book, another also, who is represented as the "prince" of the Jewish people. These names may have been applied to the respective angels in accordance with what we know to have been in the time of the Evangelist the practice of the Jews, who designated certain angels highest in the divine favor by certain names appropriate to their supposed standing.* Such accommodation, being merely in the circumstance of a name, could have no influence in diminishing the authority and truth of the fact related, although this inference has most unjustly been drawn therefrom. But, on the other hand, it is quite as probable that the prophet himself, or some other previously inspired man of God, may have originated names indicative of the condition, character and office of those angelic beings. At any rate, the Scripture is clear and express in assigning the communication to the celestial messenger so designated.

Divine directions were often given to the prophets, and occasionally to others, by means of significant symbols, and in the same manner were conveyed also to the people. And this method of communication sometimes took place in dreams and visions, and sometimes in real

* Note XIV.

actions performed by the prophets under divine direction, openly and in the presence of the people.

The symbolical dreams of Joseph, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, are predictions of future events, and in some cases are clear indications in themselves of what might be expected, while in others they require the heaven-directed interpreter or the historical development to explain the meaning. The former remark applies to Joseph's dreams of the sheaves and the heavenly bodies, and the latter to those of the other persons mentioned. The earlier part of the book of Zechariah abounds with accounts of divine communications made to the prophet in a state of vision by symbols, which were made known by him to the people in writing, or public announcement, or probably in both these ways. And here, as in other cases, some are explained to the prophet by an angel. Jeremiah's vision of the good and bad figs symbolized two classes of Jews; the good figs represented those who had already been captured, among whom were Daniel and his companions, and the bad, those who still remained in the land or were dwelling in Egypt in impenitence and wickedness. Thus the Lord himself explains the symbol to the prophet.* In prophetic vision, too, Daniel sees the ram and the he-goat symbols of the Medo-Persian and Grecian

* Jer. xxiv.

kingdoms, as explained to him by the divine attendant.* And it may be remarked that, in the choice of the symbols by which the future is indicated, the divine revealer sometimes adapts himself to the circumstances, associations and habits of the receiver. Thus the dreams of Joseph accord with his pastoral connections, and with that observation of the heavens naturally resulting therefrom in a pious and contemplative mind. Those of Pharaoh harmonize with his Egyptian associations, and Nebuchadnezzar's magnificent tree, and his great and splendid image, are symbols of power and supremacy which would naturally be cherished by the proud Babylonian monarch. The remark might probably be applied to many other cases, had we sufficient knowledge of circumstances to justify the application. But we may not be in a condition always to see the bearing of the symbol as clearly as the prophet or his contemporaries were able to do. In regard to this much may depend on education, and what is in a considerable degree incidental. But, from the accordance of the form of communication with the condition and character of the party to whom it is made, we cannot infer that the whole is nothing but a natural occurrence. This merely shows it to be in harmony with that divine condescension which induces the infinitely wise one to accommodate

* Dan. viii. 3–8, 20, 21.

his manner of communication with his creatures to their weakness and condition, thus making what is really of supernatural origin to appear in some respects like ordinary phenomena of nature.

But the symbolic method was often employed by means of real actions openly performed.

That ideas may be conveyed in this way distinctly and with perfect clearness, we know with certainty. Observation and experience have proved this beyond all doubt. In adopting this method, therefore, divine wisdom did but choose one from among various means, any of which is sufficiently well adapted to assure men of the meaning of his will. And the method chosen is sometimes the most impressive and striking that can possibly be imagined. When it is said of the prophet Isaiah, that, in obedience to the divine command to "loose the sackcloth from off" his "loins, and to put off" the "shoe from" his "foot," that "he did so, walking naked," i. e. stripped of a part of his clothing,* "and barefoot, three years, a sign and a wonder," in other words, a remarkable indication of God's judgment, "upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;"† it is hardly possible to conceive of a more direct prediction of overthrow and captivity, and of the contumely and "shame" to which Egypt, the world-renowned, the world-scorning, and in its own estimation,

* Note XV. † Isa. xx. 2, 3.

all but celestial Egypt, should be exposed. And when Ezekiel is "set for a sign unto the house of Israel," and at the command of God, "removes his furniture in the sight of" the people, "bearing it upon his shoulders and covering his face;" it would seem that the act itself spoke out its own meaning, and certified the miserable inhabitants that "they should remove and go into captivity," that "the prince" should be degraded to a servile condition, carrying the most necessary articles, and hiding his face through shame for the ignominy to which he should be subjected.*

Let us look, also, at the symbolical actions of Jeremiah. On one occasion, God orders him to "get a potter's earthen bottle," and after a public proclamation, addressed to king and people, of terrible judgments impending, and of their iniquities which occasioned them, to break the bottle in pieces in their presence, as a symbol of their utter destruction. Such preaching, one might think, could hardly need the oral comment accompanying it, which begins in these words: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel that it cannot be made whole again."† At another time, he is directed to send yokes to certain kings in the neighborhood of Judea, indicating that the creator and owner of all had resolved

* Ezek. xii. 1, et seq. † Ib. xix. 11.

to subjugate them to the Babylonian power, announcing at the same time that Zedekiah, the reigning king of Judah, should also be compelled to submit to the same degradation.* To select another illustration from the same prophet. Whilst the armies of Nebuchadnezzar are besieging Jerusalem, and its conquest by the Chaldeans is generally expected; when the death, destruction, or captivity of the inhabitants is almost morally certain, and consequently no valuation can be attached to property, the enjoyment or possession of which had become wholly precarious; Jeremiah, at the divine direction, buys a field within the city, pays down the purchase-money, requires a deed properly attested, has the transaction witnessed according to law and with remarkable circumstantiality, and adopts measures to secure the legal documents, that they may neither be lost nor injured.† No doubt, the ungodly portion of the inhabitants, who had abandoned themselves to the despair of infidelity, must have imagined that the prophet had become insane. But all this was done to show his faith in the divine promise of a future restoration, return, and resettlement of the people in their own land; which took place long afterwards under the decree of Cyrus. And to adduce one more instance: On occasion of the birth of a son, Isaiah is directed to give him a symbolical

* Jer. xxvii. † xxxii.

name, indicative of the fact that the Assyrians should plunder Israel and Syria, powers which were then in hostile combination against Judah. In order to give publicity to the prediction, he is required to write the name of the child on a broad roll or tablet. He does so, and has the whole matter attested by unimpeachable witnesses of high standing and character.* In due time the fact takes place, and the prophecy is verified.

In these and other similar instances, it cannot be doubted, that the prophets were fully conscious of the truth and certainty of their predictions; that they knew and felt themselves to be agents of God, speaking in his name, and consequently that the existence of error in what they thus announced is impossible.

These are some of those "divers manners" in which God hath spoken to his prophets, and by them to his people and to all subsequent ages. The time will not permit me to draw out in detail any practical application of the subject. I will therefore conclude by remarking, that the certainty of God's having made communications to men, and his goodness in employing methods of conveyance, best adapted to the present condition of human nature, are alike subjects which should excite our most grateful emotions of thanksgiving.

* Isaiah viii. 1, et seq.

DISCOURSE V.

PROPHETIC VISION.

I have spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions by the ministry of the prophets.—Hosea xii. 10.

In the last discourse I treated of certain of those diverse manners in which at sundry times God spoke to and by the prophets. The topic now to engage your attention, if not a continuation of the former, is at least very intimately allied to it. "I have multiplied visions," saith the Lord, "by the ministry of the prophets." I propose to remark on prophecy as communicated in vision.

It has already been made sufficiently clear, that impressions produced on the mind of the prophet have to him all the vividness of reality, and perhaps even in a greater degree than outward actions can have by means of the usual bodily organs. The things predicted may be remote in time and place, but to the mind of the divine seer they are present living realities, and are described as such. Stationed, as it were, on an eminence, the prophet sees differ-

ent points, however distant they may be, in one view. In his rapt mind, he observes before him an outline of the future, delineated and portrayed in different degrees of graphic minuteness, the prospect more or less apparently distant, sometimes obscurely marked and sometimes presented in bold relief, as in a picture; the distant now mingling itself with what is close at hand, now fading away in the remote perspective. He follows the order of appearance, not that of space, or chronology, or history. He is intent upon the scene, and borne along by that commanding influence which fixes his whole soul upon the prospect. The representation is deeply impressed upon his mind, and when he comes again to his natural condition, he copies what he has seen, and describes what he has witnessed. Any point of particular interest and importance which may have fixed the attention of the elevated seer, he brings out prominently by repeated and various representations. The copy, however, is a faithful picture of the original, the description a true account of the fact; but the coloring, the style, the figures,—these are peculiar to the writer, and they are modified by the diversity of external circumstances, which have contributed to form his whole mental and moral constitution.

Some have supposed that even the very words of the prophets were suggested to them by di-

vine inspiration; and again, that in the reception and announcement of sacred truth they are merely passive under the uncontrollable action of the Almighty, whose will they are compelled to announce. It makes no part of my plan to discuss questions of this sort, nor would such discussion comport very well with the time or the place. It may be allowable to say, however, that there does not seem to be sufficient reason for adopting such a theory. If it be true under the Gospel, that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," there is no good reason why it may not be presumed to be equally true under the Law; and the command to Balaam to speak what God should put in his mouth, would seem useless, if, by the necessary condition of his prophetic state, he could not do otherwise. And, with the exception of some very marked and peculiar cases, in which the prophets themselves may not have been conscious of the full meaning and import of the words employed, it is clear that the prophecies do exhibit evidence of diversity of natural powers, and of characteristic peculiarities in manner and style. To assume that even these are but the results of the influence of the heavenly afflatus, is to multiply divine interposition to an extent entirely unwarranted by authority.

Let us approach the Hebrew prophet, and catch, if possible, a glimpse of the scene that

he surveys. The man of God is on his watch-tower. The Spirit of the Highest seizes him. He is entranced, and in holy vision gazes on the prospect. It is his own native country, "the glory of all lands,"* that lies in his view. Amazement overwhelms him. Silence, long and deep, shows his unutterable feelings. At length he speaks. Let us draw nearer and listen:

I am pained at my very heart;
My heart throbs within me;
I cannot be still.—
For the voice of the trumpet,
The war-shout, O my soul, thou hear'st it.
Destruction upon destruction is cried out,
The whole country is wasted.
In an instant crushed are my tents,
My hangings in a moment.
How long must I see the standard?
Must hear the voice of the trumpet?
I behold the earth;
And, lo, it is waste and desolate!
The heavens, and they have no light!
The sun is extinguished;
The moon is turned into blood;
The stars are quenched!
I behold the mountains;
And, lo, they tremble,
And all the hills quake.
I behold, and, lo, there is not a man;
All the birds of the air have flown away.
I behold, and, lo, Carmel is a desert:

* Ezek. xx. 6, 15. Comp. Dan. xi. 16, 41.

All its cities are destroyed;
At the presence of Jehovah,
At the presence of his fierce indignation.*

Such are the bitter groanings which a Hebrew prophet utters, and such the awful images which he employs in describing the desolations of war when it ravages his own dear native land; groanings, which force their way from his lacerated and bleeding heart; images, the sublimity of which is only equalled by their terror.

The minds of those "holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," were so fully imbued with the thought of Messiah's advent, and of its accompanying blessings, that it naturally suggests itself, and they seize on every fitting occasion to bring it before the view of their readers. Do they represent the political and civil degradation of the people, the irreligion and immorality of the nation? The plain developments of this sort which they make, are most generally contrasted with bright and glowing pictures of happiness, and glory, and righteousness, which are to characterize the period of Messiah's uncontrolled dominion. Thus Isaiah, after depicting most graphically the wretched condition of the despairing sinner in the destitution caused by the all-powerful

* Jer. iv. 19–26. For lines 15, 16, 17, see Isa. xiii. 10. Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8, and Joel ii. 10, 31.

Assyrian, sees in the distant horizon the coming blessedness, and turns from the one scene to its opposite with joyous exultation. He beholds the nation oppressed, the country almost destroyed. The wanderer passes through it distressed and famishing. In his desperation he curses his king and his God. He gazes upward, but in vain; there is no help for him in heaven. He looks on the earth; behold darkness distracting and terrific. He is driven on in darkness. Yet this distress shall not be perpetual. The country at first disgraced, vilified and injured, shall hereafter be honored and made glorious. The prophet now enjoys a vision of future felicity, which he describes in his own unrivalled excellence of manner:

The people that walked in darkness
Behold a great light!
They that sit in the shadow of death,
Light beams upon them!
Thou hast increased the nation,
Thou hast augmented their joy;
They rejoice before thee as in the joy of harvest,
As victors exult in dividing the spoil.
For the yoke that burdened them,
The staff that smote their shoulder,
The rod of the oppressor,
Thou hast broken in pieces,
As in the day of Midian.
For every greave of the combatant in the tumult,
And the blood-stained war-dress,
Is for burning, is fuel for the flames.

For a child is born unto us,
A son is given unto us,
And the government shall be upon his shoulder;
And they shall call him
Wonder, Counsellor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.*

If certain future events are through the influence of divine Providence related to each other as cause and effect, or are otherwise associated, they may be represented in the same connection as if they were proximate. It is by no means unusual with the prophets to connect different and remote events, or conditions of society, depicting them in one series of representation, the description sometimes comprehending all and being equally or directly applicable to each, sometimes being particularly applicable to the nearer and sometimes to the more remote, and occasionally to the one or to the other exclusively. Attempts have indeed been made to show that in all such cases as those in contemplation, the application of the prophet's language should be limited to one event, or one consecutive series of events, or to one condition continuously developing itself; or, if considered as comprehending two different classes of events, then that every portion of the representation must equally apply to each. But the latter theory is neither neces-

* Note XVI.

sary to explain the prophet's language, nor is it sustained by an examination of the facts predicted. On the former, we must either give an unnatural and forced construction of the prophet's words, or deny the correctness and authority of the application made of them in the New Testament.* The principle just laid down is the only satisfactory one, inasmuch as none other is competent to sustain the divine authority of the inspired writers of both dispensations; and it comports with the character and design of the prophets in announcing the evangelical dispensation. I proceed, therefore, to illustrate this view.

The return of the Jewish exiles from the captivity in Babylon with their re-settlement in their own land, is certainly a most prominent topic, and one which is continually recurring in the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah. No candid reader will think of denying this. The national chastisement has been suffered in all its severity; national iniquity is expiated and forgiven. The herald announces the return of the ransomed ones, and God's glory is revealed in the very act. Thus the portion begins. And the same view is repeatedly presented. The feet of the messengers that proclaim peace, happiness, restoration, are beautiful. The exiles are called on: "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans; depart ye, depart ye,

* Note XVII.

go ye out from thence."* However powerful and glorious is this kingdom now, it shall be dishonored, ruined, utterly devastated. All this is most plainly declared. But is nothing more intended? If not, the various portions of these chapters do not naturally connect together; many of them not being susceptible of so limited an exposition, and some not bearing on the subject at all. If not, the application made of parts of them in the New Testament is inexplicable on any tenable ground. Doubtless much more is intended. The return of mankind to God through the instrumentality of the gospel, the joyous announcement of the Messiah's forerunner, and of the glorious and divine Messiah himself, the downfall of the mystical Babylon, the empire of sin, Satan and the world, out of which the Redeemer's subjects are to be called into his true and holy mystical church; these are topics which principally occupy the prophet's mind, of which the other predicted facts are merely the symbols, the ground, as I may say, on which the prophetic picture is raised and brought out in bold relief. We cannot sever the one train of thought from the other. Both must be combined, in order to present a clear and consistent and satisfactory view.

The same general principle explains also the application made in the New Testament of other

* Is xlviii. 20. lii. 11.

portions of Isaiah's prophecies. The tenth chapter predicts the downfall of the Assyrian power, which in the time of the prophet invaded and almost ruined his native country. It represents this power as the mere agent of the Almighty in punishing his people, as the rod which, after it has been used for purposes of discipline and improvement, shall be broken and burned. It threatens punishment, indeed, and that severe, commingled, however, with the promise of preservation. There shall not be an utter excision. A remnant shall escape and return, (v. 20, 21). This had been before promised, on the call of the prophet to his sacred office. The wasting of the cities and the houses, the desolation of the land, and the deportation of the inhabitants, are threatened: but the excision shall not be universal; there shall be a tenth and it shall return.* It is impossible to doubt that the Assyrian conquests, and the escape and deliverance of a portion of the Jews, are the burden of the prophecy. And it is equally certain that it comprehends also the spiritual restoration of a part of the people by conversion to the gospel: in the language of the prophet, the "return of the remnant to the mighty God;"† in that of the apostle, the salvation of "the remnant according to the election of grace."‡ The two series of events are both intended. And

* Is. vi. 11–13. † Ib. x. 21.
‡ Rom. xi. 5.

indeed they are both intimately connected, though not in time, as parts of one divine plan, and therefore they are seen in the prophet's vision and described in his writings as really conjoined. Perfectly natural, therefore, was it for the prophet to introduce the Messiah's kingdom immediately after the overthrow of the Assyrian; and this he does in figures replete with poetic beauty. The ungodly and infidel power, that deified its own might,* is represented under the image of a close and immense and magnificent forest, that shall be cut down and wholly consumed. But, on the contrary, the little twig that sprouts from the stem of Jesse, shall grow apace, flourish and become exceedingly vigorous. "Behold the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, lops off the bough with a crash, consumes the glory of his forest; and he will cut down the thickets with iron, and that Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one. But there shall come forth a twig from the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."† The character of the Messiah, the redemption of his people, and the conquest of his enemies, constitute the subjects of the next chapter; and this is followed by a triumphant song of holy praise.‡

Keeping in view the principle now laid down and illustrated, a reader of the prophecies need not be surprised or feel any difficulty, when, in

* Is. x. 7–11, 13–15. † Is. x. 33, 34. xi. 1.
‡ Is. xii.

the midst of glowing representations of Messiah's future kingdom, he meets with clauses which in their connection must seem very tame, as they merely describe the rebuilding of wasted cities in Judea; or if, along with such tame description, he finds language of the highest exultation and triumph, predicting the future magnificence of the kingdom of God in glory. The return from Babylon and the re-settlement in the promised land, and the return to God and admission into his kingdom and the mansions prepared for the redeemed, are both component parts of the one great and indivisible theme.*

The principle which has been thus applied to some portions of Isaiah, is equally applicable to other parts of the Bible. The limits of a discourse, however, will not allow any extended illustration.

"I will be his father, and he shall be my son." This is quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews as proof of the incarnate Messiah's superiority to the angels.† But, says the objector to its authority and inspiration, the original passage in the second Book of Samuel evidently refers to Solomon, of whom it is immediately added that, "if he commit iniquity," he shall be punished, though not to the extremest de-

* Compare the concluding remarks of Note XVII.

† 2 Sam. vii. 14. Heb. i. 5.

gree. The New Testament argument, therefore, is altogether a mistake.

Now we cannot deny that there is some truth in the statement, however unfounded we may rightly regard the conclusion that has been drawn. The prophet Nathan is sent to tell David that he cannot be allowed to build the house of God, the temple, on the erection of which his heart had been fully set. It comported with the divine purpose that this should be the work of Solomon, his son and successor. "I will set up thy seed after thee, and he shall build a house for my name:" (vs. 12, 13.) Then it follows: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." I leave the remainder to be supplied by yourselves, as it will readily occur to every reader of his Bible. Now, after examining the connection of the language in the Old Testament and its application in the New, in what way shall we relieve ourselves from the embarrassment which necessarily follows? Shall we make an effort to explain the prophecy entirely of Christ, and thus do palpable violence to the context without satisfying the inquirer? or, shall we affirm that the application in the Hebrews is an unmeaning accommodation, and thus set aside the authority of the sacred writer? or, shall we venture to say that one clause of the prophecy is intended exclusively of Solomon, and the very next of Christ? This is merely gratuitous, and contradicted by the evi-

dent connection of the different parts of the discourse. No properly thinking interpreter can feel satisfied with any one of these courses. Let us, then, bring to this case the application of the principle under consideration. Let us suppose that Nathan predicts to David a royal progeny, not merely an individual son, but a succession of kings in lineal descent, and that this is "the seed" of whom he is speaking. It is evident that, although Solomon takes his place as one important link in this golden chain of regal dignities, "a greater than Solomon" makes the most distinguished figure in it; and that therefore whatever of excellent and honorable and glorious is in a degree applicable to any one of the line, is most appropriately and fully applicable to him. And what could not with truth be applied to him at all, must of course be limited to certain others in the line, or to some particular one. And so when it is said of one, namely, Solomon, "he shall build my house," meaning the material temple, the language applies in an infinitely higher sense to Him who was to raise up that spiritual temple of which the material was but a symbol, that "house of God, the church of the living God," which is to become the "house of prayer for all nations." In this view the prediction to David receives its complete fulfilment only in the triumphs of David's Lord, only in the elevation of Christ in his human nature to

lordship over the Universe. Consequently, it is abundantly sufficient to prove his superiority even to the highest angels.*

Further, it is, to say the least, extremely probable, that this same principle affords the correct rule whereby to interpret several of the Psalms. In these sacred poems, we frequently meet with statements and representations of a very peculiar kind, apparently inapplicable to any ordinary human being, and yet so intimately associated with other statements and representations plainly intended of some mortal man or well-known character, that it becomes very difficult to give a clear and continuous exposition of the whole composition, on the usual principles applied to language in general. Now let it be considered that the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices of the Hebrews were institutions under divine appointment and sanction. They were established not merely for the general purposes of religious instruction, worship, and government, but also as symbolical institutions, bearing evidence of their own imperfection and also promise of a better establishment to come, and of a personage who should fully concentrate in himself whatever might be necessary to the perfection of the character and the office. Such a view harmonizes with the nature of the dispensation. The Hebrew prophet, priest or king is there-

* Note XVIII.

fore not to be regarded as an isolated individual. He is officially connected with him who was to come, and properly to execute these high and important functions. The inspired Hebrew Psalmist, therefore, when speaking of any one of those dignitaries, would naturally have his mind directed to the office. He would not be limited by any individual subject of discourse, even if his original purpose should have related to one person. Rather he would have in view the official character, the whole consecutive line of individuals composing it, and of course Christ, as the very essential perfection of their nature, whom they all adumbrated, and in whom they all centered. On this theory, the difficulty before alluded to vanishes.

Thus, in the 21st Psalm, where the author bursts out in the triumphant strain, "The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice,"—we need not restrict the application of his glowing language to David or Solomon, or any individual monarch. It is the character whom he celebrates, *the king* of the Hebrews, comprehending of course the great king Messiah. And thus again, "*the prophet*" whom God promises by Moses that he "will raise up," is not merely one individual who is to make his appearance at some indefinitely future period, but a succession of prophets, of all of whom Christ is the very chief and the very life. And

the same remark may be made of that "faith ful priest," whose permanent establishment in the divine favor, as the reward of conduct in accordance with the divine "mind," the sacred messenger predicted to the unhappy Eli.*

This characteristic of prophecy, which appears conspicuously in the Old Testament, is not without its parallel in the New, the importance of which may entitle it to be regarded as equivalent to many. Our Saviour's prophecy in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew, with the similar portions of the other Evangelists, can hardly be satisfactorily explained on any other theory. Several points here may be regarded as undeniable. The destruction of Jerusalem, with the concomitant establishment of Christ's church, is certainly predicted; also his future coming in glory to judge the world, to punish his enemies, and to reward his faithful adherents. It is certain, too, that some portions of these chapters cannot possibly be explained of the one series of events, and some other portions cannot possibly be explained of the other. Further, the whole of the 25th chapter, and a portion of the 24th, manifestly relate exclusively to his coming in glory. On what ground shall a dispassionate and consistent interpreter take his stand? Will he maintain, that certain verses of the former part of the prediction must be explained *solely* of the

* 1 Sam. ii. 35.

destruction of Jerusalem, and certain other verses in most intimate connection *solely* of the final overthrow of the impenitent; and this simply because the language would suitably describe the respective occasions? But the attempt to carry out such a principle will not bear examination. For not to say that the language, although best descriptive of one, might well suit either, the divine author of the prophecy did himself give a clew to the meaning when he said, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled;"* that is, the present generation of men shall not have entirely disappeared, until the antecedent predictions shall have been accomplished. We must therefore find some meaning of all that precedes which shall harmonize with this declaration. And yet, certain parts of what precedes seem to describe Christ's future glorious coming, in poetic language of the most lofty character; and it would seem harsh and unreasonable to limit such language to the fall of Jerusalem and immediately connected events. Shall we say that it must be limited to his future coming? Not to urge that the Saviour's declaration just mentioned precludes such a resort, the word which introduces the poetic language alluded to, plainly shows that it cannot be thus limited. The events predicted are to take place *immediately* after the destruction of Je-

* Matt. xxiv. 34.

rusalem by the Romans. This determines the time.* The darkening of the sun, the withdrawing of the moon's light, the falling of the stars, the appearance of the Son of man on the clouds, the sending forth of the angels to gather the elect,—whatever these may mean,—most certainly describe events chronologically connected with the overthrow of Jerusalem; for we are told that they are to take place *immediately* afterwards. This conclusion we may safely regard as a settled point. But still the question recurs, do they describe nothing else? And if we will answer this question on reasonable grounds of probability, and in accordance with analogous prophecy, we must say that they do describe something else, namely, the future coming of Christ, the future overthrow of the wicked, and the future establishment of the just in the everlasting and glorious heavenly kingdom of their Father. Both series of events must be regarded as intended by the divine speaker, the one, in all probability, emblematic of the other.

And it is only on the same principle that we can explain the connection of the two last verses of the 16th chapter of St. Matthew. The "coming of the Son of man in the glory of his Father, with his angels," to "reward every man according to his works," is unquestionably his final coming. And yet it is placed in most in-

* Note XIX.

timate connection with the solemn affirmation, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." It must be evident that the two verses describe events which, in time, are widely separated; the one class to take place while some of those then present were still living, and the other at the Saviour's final and most glorious advent. The reason of such connection is that the final glorious coming or appearing of Christ to judge the world, to punish his enemies, and to reward his followers, and his coming or appearance as exalted Messiah, by his resurrection, ascension, miraculous emission of his Spirit, overthrow of his rebel enemies the Jews, and consequent firm establishment of his church, are series of events analogous to each other, inasmuch as both strikingly illustrate, and indeed are prominent developments of his triumphant success.

What conclusions now shall we draw from this scriptural representation?

In the first place, we may infer that prophetic declarations are not always presented in the Bible in chronological order. The prophet is neither an annalist nor a historian, and his reader has no right to expect such a consecutive series of events as might reasonably be required in a historian. This would be to make a demand inconsistent with the very nature of the composition.

In the second place, we may infer that the prophet nevertheless does maintain a real and a lucid order. It is the order of things rather than of time. But this is not universal. Neither is it essential to his prophetic character. It is the one great topic which engages his attention, and fills his whole mind. What is it to him, raised to the third heaven, unconscious whether in the body or out of the body, whether the fact predicted take place to-morrow or a thousand years hence? With the divine One who inspires him, a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years; and his prophetic representations partake of their Author's character. Time is comparatively nothing. The connecting link of prophetic declarations is found principally in the nature of the things declared.

Thirdly, we may infer by way of caution, that before one can claim a right to decide on some points of a prophetic nature, he must have carefully examined the subject in general, both as to the language and as to the facts. An isolated examination of some particular topics can hardly be attended by a satisfactory result. Indeed it can hardly be satisfactorily made, because the right examination of one requires a practical application of the principles which govern or modify all. While, therefore, the self-confident will unhesitatingly leap to a conclusion, to which he will most tenaciously cling,

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the better disciplined, and therefore generally more modest, will collect such information as may guide him in the search of truth, and when he cannot clearly see his way, he will patiently wait for further illumination. If it be withheld, he will humbly and submissively acquiesce; if granted, he will thank God, take courage, and advance.

DISCOURSE VI.

PROPHETIC SIMILE AND FIGURE.

I have spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. —Hosea xii. 10.

The topic of prophetic vision, referred to in the verse just read, was the subject of my last discourse. I then attempted to illustrate some general principles bearing upon the true and full interpretation of many prophetic declarations. The similitudes by means of which the prophets were able to convey the intended truth with most effect, is the next point suggested by the text: "I have used similitudes by the prophets."

The original verb has been interpreted by some eminent commentators in a passive sense; by others, no less distinguished, in an active. Thus, according to the former view, it will be translated, 'I have been assimilated' or 'represented by the prophets;' or, which is equivalent, 'I have represented myself by them.' According to the latter, the translation will be

as in our English Bibles, "I have used similitudes."* It is unnecessary now to examine the comparative claims of these two views. The latter is preferable, as it conveys the simplest and most probable meaning.

The prophet, no doubt, employed the word similitude in a very extended sense. It may comprehend typical institutions, or facts, or characters, adumbrating religious views and principles. It may comprise also instruction by means of parable and allegory, so often employed by the prophets to convey truth or impress threatening. It includes all teaching by symbols, whether taken from natural objects, as Jeremiah's figs; from civil and political associations, as Daniel's ram and he-goat; or from common occurrences in life, as Isaiah's walking for a time divested of his outer clothing, and Jeremiah's visit to the house of the potter. Whatever comes under these, or any similar categories, may be considered as implied in the term *similitude*. It is therefore as if God had said by Hosea, 'I have set before you various correct representations of the important realities intended to be conveyed to your minds and consciences, and in such a way as to teach them the most clearly and impressively.'

My intention, however, in this discourse, is not to examine into these various modes of in-

* See Pococke on Hosea, pp. 684, 685, 1685, fol.

struction by means of similitudes. I purpose to confine myself to a single meaning of the word, that of simile, comparison, or figure, in the common sense of the terms, in contradistinction to a merely literal signification. I have been led to adopt this course, in consequence of an extravagant application of the literal principle which characterizes certain expositors of prophecy in the present age; and especially when the subject either does or is thought to refer to the restoration of Israel, the subjection of their enemies, the final coming of the Messiah, and his future and universal reign.

The account contained in the Bible of the primitive condition and character of man, evidently implies that the gift of communicating thoughts by language was, to some extent at least, an original endowment, a constituent faculty of his nature. To what degree this ability extended in the case of our first parents, it is impossible for us to say. Of one thing we are certain, that it was co-extensive with their necessities and mutual satisfactions, in that "very good" condition of their nature in which the benevolent Author of their being had created them. And, moreover, the remarkable fact stated of Adam not long after his creation, that "whatsoever he called every living creature, that was the name thereof,"* proves that the degree of the gift could not have been very

* Gen. ii. 19.

limited. Still, inasmuch as divine Wisdom does nothing in vain, and analogy shows us that his moral and intellectual creatures are placed in circumstances calling on them to improve their natural endowments, we may reasonably infer that the original faculty of language was rather elementary than in a state of perfection, and that it was left to man to improve, amplify and extend the natural gift. It might be expected, then, that, in the earliest stages of the human race, the small stock of words known to the species would be applied to other objects than those which were at first thereby designated. Hence would arise a vast variety of figurative expressions, appearing partly in isolated metaphorical words, and partly in continuous allegorical statements. These would, of course, be drawn from objects most familiar, and, as society advanced, from facts also of biography and history most important and interesting. In a short time, comparisons, similitudes, illustrations, would become almost universal: so that metaphorical words would be generally used by speakers, who had either lost all recollection of, or had never known, their original meaning; and comparisons and allegories would be employed to express consecutive series of events. In such cases the possibility of a misconception of meaning, most likely would never occur either to the speaker and writer, or to the hearer.

The simplest biographical and historical nar-

ratives, therefore, might reasonably be expected to abound with figurative words and representations. And the slightest examination of the book of Genesis shows that this is true.* And how much more likely is this to be the case in those kinds of composition which sprang from a more elevated state of mind, and consequently required a loftier and more ornate style, as, for instance, poetry and prophecy! It need therefore excite no surprise, if, in such portions of Holy Scripture, figurative language should not only be found to exist, but should even be the pervading, controlling, and predominant characteristic.

The figurative language of the prophets is drawn, as might naturally be expected, from various sources; sometimes from incidental circumstances of their education and early habits; sometimes from particulars connected with the lives of the patriarchs. It may frequently be traced to contemporaneous historical events, and still more frequently to well-known and important facts in the general history of the Hebrew nation. In the remarks and illustrations which follow, I shall confine myself chiefly, if not exclusively, to the two latter, and principally indeed to the last.

The most remarkable series of facts taking place under the direction of Jehovah, the God of the whole earth, yet particularly of the He-

* Note XX.

brews, was undoubtedly the deliverance of the nation by the instrumentality of Moses from Egyptian bondage, their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, their wanderings for forty years in the Arabian desert under divine guidance, and their settlement at last in the promised land, led by the victorious Joshua. If we keep in mind the general truth, of which we are sufficiently assured by divine revelation, that the Mosaic economy was symbolical of "good things to come," we shall feel no difficulty in recognizing the particular truth, no less clearly taught by the same sacred authority, that the promised land was a figure of the religious man's heavenly inheritance, including also that heavenly condition of reconciliation to God and blessed acceptance by him, in which the sincere believer is placed by the gospel.

It is therefore altogether natural, that the holy prophets, writing under the absorbing influence of that "faith which is the confident and substantial expectation of things hoped for," should employ those facts in the history of their ancestors, facts on which the religious and patriotic memory loved to linger, as illustrative of the spiritual blessings which they would portray. And, on the same principle, the return of the exiles from Babylonia and Assyria, their happy restoration to civil and religious privileges in their own regenerated land, and city, and church, the overthrow of

their implacable enemies, together with circumstances connected with these most interesting events, would naturally become a storehouse, whence to draw illustrations of future spiritual benediction and happiness. The prince of Grecian orators rises to the most striking climax of his eloquence by an appeal to one of the proudest monuments of his country's honor;* and the most glowing and heart-stirring representations of the prophets are figurative delineations of future glory, drawn from the brightest pages which record the triumphs of God's ancient church and people.

Most of the prophets afford ample illustrations of this remark. Let me appeal first to the writings of Isaiah. In the 11th chapter he introduces the Messiah under the figure of a twig or branch, in contradistinction to the mighty Lebanon, the prostrated Assyrian power. He describes the Messiah's character, his gifts, the peaceful felicity that should distinguish his reign, the universality of his blessed and holy influence, vs. 1–9. He predicts the union of the Gentiles with the recovered people of the Lord wherever dispersed, under the same divine Head; the cessation of mutual hostility, and their united efforts in opposition to all enemies whomsoever. Divine interposition is promised. Obstructions shall be removed, and every necessary facility be afforded, to advance the

* Demosthenes on the Crown, sect. 60.

joyous consummation, 10–16. A hymn of thanksgiving closes the subject, xii.

Now all this is exhibited in a succession of beautiful figures, partly taken from a supposed golden age of animal nature, partly perhaps from the deportations to which the Hebrews had been at various times subjected; partly from jealous and rival animosities which had of old rankled in the breasts of Jews and Ephraimites. The old and implacable enemies of the Israelites, namely, the Philistines, Moabites, and others, represent the spiritual foes of Messiah's kingdom, to whom his redeemed ones are to grant no quarter. The favor of God in rescuing his people from the slavery of sin, Satan and the world, is described in figurative language, taken from the drying up of the Red Sea, and the miraculous guidance through the desert, as on "a highway." And the very song of praise, in which the redeemed are made to testify their gratitude, is founded on that which "Moses and the children of Israel sang," on emerging from the sea, and escaping the vengeance of their oppressors. To this song allusion is also made in the words of the Apocalypse, "The song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb."*

Let us look at another instance of this figurative language, taken from the same deliverance from Egypt, only carried out more extensively

* Note XXI.

The second chapter of Hosea is a prophetic discourse, founded upon the representation, contained in the former chapter, of the idolatry, rejection, and subsequent forgiveness and acceptance of the Israelites. In this discourse the prophet's mind evidently dwells on the historical facts just mentioned, allusions to which he interweaves along with his own original thoughts. The figure is that of a wife who had become faithless and abandoned. She is urged to reformation under threats of severest punishment. Her infamous conduct in leaving her husband and attaching herself to favorites who were supposed to supply her with comforts, figuratively represents Israelitish idolatry, contemptuous neglect of God, and devotion to false objects of worship, v. 2–5.* The figure is kept up in the following verses, where the methods employed by divine goodness to reclaim the wanderer are depicted under the same image, with an occasional intermingling of threats denounced in literal terms, 6–13. In further describing this attempt and its results, the language proceeds thus: "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as

* In marking the verses I have followed the English translation, which varies from the notation in the Hebrew.

in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt," 14, 15. The *wilderness* is in manifest allusion to the wanderings in the desert preparatory to the entrance into Canaan, and the *speaking comfortably* to the promises, accompanied by frequent interpositions of divine favor, by which those wanderings were marked. *Vineyards* are figurative of recruited strength, and consequently of satisfaction and joy. *The valley of Achor* refers to the narrative recorded in the book of Joshua. The name, which signifies *trouble*, was imposed on the place in memory of the unworthy conduct of Achan, and of its immediate detection and severe punishment. His criminal transgression of God's command had brought great trouble upon the Israelites, and involved them in a signal defeat, and that soon after they had entered the enemy's land. But the prophet's prediction is not one of distress and trouble; on the contrary, it is an announcement of favor and happiness. Therefore, says he, from the very desert, dry and barren, God will give vineyards; and the valley, whose name even is a perpetual memorial of the trouble once occasioned there, shall open before you in all its beauty with loveliest prospects of hope. The same allusion is made also by Isaiah. He is speaking of the union of Gentiles with the spiritual "seed of Jacob" in the church of the Messiah. Under the appellations "mine

elect and my servants," he promises them a continuance of the divine blessing, and employs figures taken from the country long possessed by the nation, and endeared to them by innumerable associations. "Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have *sought me*." And, to make it evident that this cannot possibly be interpreted, either literally or figuratively, merely of converted Jews dwelling happily under the divine favor in the land of Palestine, we have only to examine the context, which does most certainly compel us to comprehend converted Gentiles. Its whole tenor might be adduced as confirmatory of the truth of this remark, but it is sufficient to quote the first words of the chapter, which are applied by St. Paul to such Gentiles in contradistinction to unbelieving Jews: "*I am sought* of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that *sought me not*;" that is, I have become known by Gentiles who formerly neglected me, but who now seek my favor.* In the discourse of Hosea the penitent and redeemed people pour out praises to God their Saviour as the youthful nation also did when delivered from the fear of their Egyptian tyrants.

Let us attend now to the other leading fact in Hebrew history, which has supplied the sacred seers with figures or symbols whereby to illus-

* Isa. lxv. 10, 1. Rom. x. 20.

trate future spiritual blessings. The same evangelical prophet will furnish abundant materials.

The return from the Babylonian captivity and the re-establishment in the promised land are, as I have before said, prominent subjects of the latter portions of Isaiah's prophecies. These events are seen by him in prophetic vision. They were yet to come. In this particular they differ from the other class of events, which had become matters of well-authenticated history, manifestations of miraculous power, and accomplishments of old and often-repeated divine promises. It might, therefore, be presumed, that the use of future although certain facts as figures or symbols of other facts yet more and perhaps vastly more future still, would be more limited and less definitely marked than the use of facts well known to all, and regarded by all as the very ground of national glory. Reasonable anticipations of the future prosperity of our own beloved and most highly favored country cannot but delight and animate every patriotic citizen, and prompt the prayer that we may ever continue civilly and politically one, and also become one morally and religiously. But what American heart does not beat with a peculiar feeling at the thought of the revolutionary struggle and the revolutionary glory? not sustained nor acquired without aid, not miraculous indeed but wonderfully providential, from the same divine source

that effected the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, and their establishment as a "great and understanding people." The Hebrew prophet cannot lose his character as a Hebrew patriot, nor fail to make his appeals to his fellow-countrymen as patriots also. Consequently his figures and pictures and symbols taken from the former events must be more graphical and more clearly developed than those drawn from any subsequent deliverance, however important.

In the time of the prophet Isaiah, his country was invaded by the Assyrians, whose armies devastated large portions, and struck terror into the hearts of the inhabitants. Parts of his prophecies, and the corresponding history in the first Book of the Kings, contain a record of the facts. And even as early as his time the Babylonian power had begun to develop its characteristic pride and insolence. This was the chief instrument employed by God to chastise his sinful and idolatrous people. Judea was invaded, Jerusalem taken and sacked, the glorious temple pillaged and burned, the king blinded and imprisoned, his subjects reduced to captivity in a strange land. But their condition, although deplorable, was not hopeless. A happy return to their country and to their God had been predicted, and accordingly it took place. The old dwelling-places teemed again with inhabitants, and the waste and deso-

late cities were rebuilt and occupied. Jerusalem became a joy in the land, and the second temple was erected on the ruins of the first, much inferior, indeed, in splendor to that of Solomon the truly magnificent, but yet a noble structure, not unfit for the imposing religious services to the celebration of which it was devoted. All these events the prophet foresees and describes. But, in connection with them, he describes also the return of all the true Israelites, whether Jews or Gentiles, to God, by conversion to Christ and union in his church, of which the material temple was a symbol. In this description, he intermingles figures suggested by the literal captivity, return, and rebuilding. As the heathen, influenced doubtless by the example of Cyrus, facilitated the restoration of the exiles, their future union with the Jews in Messiah's kingdom is expressed by the figure of turning their wealth and personal services to the advantage of the church, and threats are denounced against all who shall refuse to render such service, to contribute such aid, and to unite in solemn public acts of religion.

I would now illustrate what has been said; although I am well aware that, to treat the subject properly and fully would rather require a volume than the concluding pages of a sermon.

The 60th chapter of Isaiah is undoubtedly one of the most sublime compositions extant. Were it merely a production of human genius,

I would not hesitate to speak of it as among the most noble and brilliant conceptions of the human mind. The leading thought is the restoration, development, establishment, progress and advancement to perfect final happiness and glory, of God's kingdom. On this woof the inspired author weaves the warp of illustration, thick and full, crowded with the richest and most beautiful imagery, rightly to appreciate which, requires a mind somewhat in harmony with the intellectual, moral, and spiritual condition of the prophet. The subject of the composition is the church of the living God. Distressed and degraded by the character and condition of its own members, wholly incompetent to raise itself from its deplorable destitution, the coming of its divine Redeemer with the gift of his Spirit is announced.* And in view of the blessed results which are to follow, the prophet calls on the depressed community to "arise," and to reflect the divine light which is beaming upon them. Gentiles are to be attracted by it. Even the noblest are to be drawn from a distance, aiding the weak members of the old relationship, and pouring joy and gratitude into their bosoms, v. 1–5. In illustration of this idea the prophet brings together whatever was regarded as most useful and valuable in surrounding and in distant countries. In vast numbers, and in most direct and rapid course,

* Isaiah lix. 16–21.

they hurry on to aid, comfort and swell the multitude. No necessary and useful service shall be withheld from the divinely favored body on whom Jehovah has "had mercy," 6–10. Safety and conscious security are expressed under the figure of "gates continually open," which also conveys the idea of accumulation of prosperity and subjection of adversaries represented as captives, led into the metropolis, 11, 12. Vegetable nature, in all the glory of its most imposing and splendid forms, contributes to heighten the general effect. Opposers are to be subjugated; a mighty and universal change is to take place in the condition of the once despised community. The ordinary productions of a richly endowed country are to be superseded by such as are vastly better. The government is to be in the highest sense happy and righteous; and everything is to indicate safety of condition and gratitude of mind, 11–18. Permanent felicity of the most exalted kind is promised, in poetic figures commensurate with the elevated theme. The material sun and moon are too dim and changeful to afford light adapted to so glorious a state. Their Maker diffuses the correspondent illumination, and dispels all sorrow. Righteousness and stability and ever-increasing strength become perpetual; and thus the glory of the Lord is advanced, 19–22.

It is impossible to read these and other such

prophetic delineations of a happy future, without feeling at once that the language is in the highest degree figurative and poetic. Most of it cannot possibly be otherwise regarded. Intermingled with these poetic representations, passages do indeed occur which are susceptible of a literal interpretation. It is possible that "strangers may build the walls" of Jewish cities, and that "kings may minister" to the restored Hebrew nation. It is possible that in the period referred to, the gates of Jerusalem shall be continually left open. It is possible that a new temple may be built on the site now occupied by the mosque of Omar, that the growth of Lebanon may contribute to its beauty, and that the most precious stones that can be procured in Europe and Asia may decorate its walls, and gleam from the gorgeous columns of its lofty and magnificent arches. All these, and other things of the same sort, are quite possible. But what reader of taste and suitable elevation of feeling does not perceive, that to put such a meaning on these passages is to degrade them from their proper position, and thus to make the prophet speak in a manner unworthy both of himself and of his theme. To preserve harmony with the context, we must regard them as figures, taken, it may be, in part, from historical facts, but still figurative specifications, designed as portions of a complete representation of some future great and glorious

consummation. The prophet having his eye on the series of events before mentioned, may occasionally intermingle a figurative description of the one with a literal statement of some fact constituting a part of the other. As when, in the clear cloudless night, we view the bright planetary orbs and shining suns that stud the azure firmament with their glistening gold, to our imperfect natural vision all appear to lie in one and the same plane equally distant from the eye; so the prophet may see the near and the remote placed as it were together, and may now speak of what is close at hand, and then immediately of what may in reality be thousands of ages beyond it in the distant future. Thus he may speak of the building and repairing of dilapidated cities immediately on the return from Babylon in close connection with the glorious state of Messiah's kingdom in a very remote period; and he may quite consistently introduce both even in the same sentence.* He does not assert their proximity; he only speaks of them as they appear. Still it is quite probable that he employs the former as a figure whereby to describe the latter. That this is sometimes done we have the express testimony of St. James. The apostle's quotation is from Amos, but he adduces it as one among a number of prophetic representations. "To this agree the words of the prophets, as it is writ-

* See Note XVII, towards the end.

ten: After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."* What means this rebuilding of the ruinous tabernacle of David? Certainly not a literal one, for the language is employed to introduce a prediction of the union of Gentiles with the church of God. It is undoubtedly figurative of the spiritual restoration of David's authority in the person of him to whom the right belongs,† Jesus, of whom David in the plenitude of his power, was but a faint adumbration. And if this language of Amos is figurative, why may not all such language be figurative? Very much of prophetic declaration must necessarily be thus regarded. Zechariah represents the future religious condition of the church universal by the idea of all nations going to Jerusalem every year "to keep the feast of tabernacles." Extravagant interpretation, abandoning the guidance of good sense, has gone so far as to assert a literal meaning even here; but what will be said of Isaiah's prediction, which speaks of a similar visit to the temple "every Sabbath?" Were not some men's minds possessed by the very demon of prejudice, it would seem impossible to mistake the intention of the prophetic writings in such places. Doubtless it never occurred to their wise and holy authors, that folly

* Acts xv. 16. † Ezek. xxi. 32. (Eng. 27.)

and fanaticism could be carried to such an extreme as the attempt to force on their words a literal exposition, involving what is in the highest degree both ludicrous and contemptible.* All such language is figurative. This is self-evident. And if so, why may not other places be also figurative? If the promised land were an emblem of future glorious felicity in Messiah's kingdom begun on earth and perpetuated in heaven, of which the epistle to the Hebrews gives certain warrant;† why may not permanent settlement in that land with full enjoyment of its benefits, be figurative of everlasting happiness in that kingdom? If the Jewish temple were a symbol of Christ's church, why may not the re-edification of that temple, its elevation and adornment and stability, be figurative of the glory and perpetuity of that church against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail?" If the splendid services performed in the tabernacle and temple, and its ecclesiastical and religious divinely appointed officers, be introductory to something better and more perfect; why may not the predicted sacrifices, and the priests and Levites, be figurative of HIM who is, properly speaking, the

* Note XXII.

† Any illustration of this remark is purposely omitted, as a more favorable opportunity will be afforded in a small work on the Epistle to the Hebrews which the author intends to publish.

only sacrifice and the only priest? Such a view preserves consistency; it agrees with the representations contained in the New Testament; it does no violence to language; it yields nothing to fanatical extravagance; it is altogether reasonable; and it comports perfectly with the highest degree of religious character.

The development of the present favored and future glorious condition of Christ's holy catholic church, to which the subject has most naturally led, is happily in harmony with the spirit of the religious commemoration in which our venerated nursing mother, with that cordial affection which is prompted alike by natural sympathy and Christian benevolence, has kindly invited us to participate.* We of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this vast and growing country, are greatly indebted to the venerable "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," whose third Jubilee both mother and daughter unite in celebrating. To the Christian and missionary action of this most important institution, our church before the revolutionary war owed in some places her very existence, and in many her continued life and growth. By its assistance, many a church was built in our then western wilds; wilds which are now, by the

* This discourse was delivered June 22, 1851, the day appointed for the celebration of the third Jubilee of "the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts."

blessing of the God who of old conducted the Israelites through the desert, and established them in "the glory of all lands," highly cultivated, adorned with productive farms, beautiful villages, flourishing towns and cities, all teeming with inhabitants, industrious, enterprising, energetic, both physically and mentally, and likely at no very distant time to take a stand in whatever is good and useful, second to none among the great and the enterprising of the earth. By the aid of this same society, many a reverend, and holy, and self-denying missionary of the cross was sustained and cheered in his lonely position, as the church's messenger, sent forth by her to "prepare the way of the Lord," to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind up the broken in heart, and to spread the glad tidings of salvation. By the funds of this same society, and in this connection let me say also, with the co-operation of that royal personage whose active benevolence secured for her the well-earned title of "*the good queen* ANNE," many a library was founded, of books not ephemeral in their character, but of sterling worth and much pecuniary cost; and, in some churches, the communion plate presented by the daughter of the last of the Stuarts still appears on "the holy table," as a memento of the kindness of one Christian heart, that delighted to gladden the hearts of others known only by "the communion of saints," that cath-

olic bond which knits together "God's elect in one holy fellowship," merging all human titles and distinctions in that most honorable and endearing of all appellations, *brethren and sisters in Christ.*

In view, then, of these reminiscences, shall we be cold? Shall we listlessly sit down under our own widely-spreading vine and fruit-bearing fig-tree, where neither autocrat nor anarchist can make us afraid, enjoying our benefactions with selfish delight, without a thought of the destitution of our less favored brethren? God forbid! What said the man who was "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles?" "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the bond and to the free." His gratitude to God for the blessings of the gospel, which he felt and appreciated, compelled him to regard himself as under obligation to God's creatures. To the Maker he could pay nothing. All had come from him as his "unmerited gift;" and therefore his big and burning heart looked out on the creatures of infinite power and beneficence, as the only objects whom his grateful regard could benefit. He would show his thankfulness to God by devoting his life to their good. Glorious illustration of high-souled excellence! Noble example of sublime Christian character, worthy of being regarded as an exalted stan-

dard of imitation by Christians of all subsequent ages!

Let us, then, beloved brethren, contribute what aid may be in our power to send the gospel to needy brethren residing in remote regions of our own native land, or to the heathen in distant realms. Let us give our prayers; our endeavors to grow in Christian character by cherishing and cultivating universal love; our money, "as each one hath received the gift;" and our personal efforts to advance the interests of religion, within whatever sphere of action it may have pleased divine Providence to place us.

DISCOURSE VII.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INTERPRETER.

Word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed. —2 Peter i. 19.

The wise shall understand.—Dan. xii. 10.

In the discourses on prophecy already delivered to you, I have endeavored to show its divine origin, the gradually progressive nature of its development, the most usual and the most important methods in which it was communicated, its comprehensiveness and particular reference to the divine Messiah, and the figurative and poetic character of the compositions in which it is imbodied. I propose, in this last discourse, to offer some suggestions in reference to the qualifications to be attained, at least in a considerable degree, in order to a right interpretation of scriptural prophecy.

My hearers will not, I trust, fail to bear in mind, that, as the Christian preacher is not the less obliged to inculcate the necessity of righteousness and holiness because he may justly be conscious of great deficiencies in his own moral

and religious character, so neither can I be reasonably expected to lessen or modify the requisitions of an interpreter on account of a freely acknowledged incompetency in very many respects. The remarks to be made may, therefore, have a fair claim for consideration in the abstract.

The various qualifications essential to a competent interpretation of the prophetic parts of holy Scripture, may be divided into two general classes, intellectual and moral.

I. Of necessary intellectual qualifications, the very first, without which there can be no well-ascertained and settled exposition, is a competent knowledge of the language of the prophets in general, and of the particular usage of each. To prove or illustrate so plain and self-evident a principle, would certainly be a gratuitous labor, as it carries its own demonstration along with it. If we wish to understand what is spoken, we must be ourselves acquainted with the language of the speaker. Otherwise we must depend upon the interpretation of another, and this would be to abandon the object; for, in this case, we should be compelled implicitly to trust the interpreter. And, as most writers and speakers have certain modes of expression or thought proper to themselves, which often give a coloring to their representations, the interpreter who would catch their full meaning must not neglect these peculiarities. All this, there-

fore, may well be presumed, as no sensible person will think of questioning its correctness. And yet there would be no difficulty to fill a volume with quotations from works on the prophecies, proving to the satisfaction of every intelligent reader, that the authors were unacquainted with the meaning of the words employed by the prophet, and indeed that they had framed interpretations without any reference to the original language of the prediction. Thus, for example, we have one popular expositor, introduced to us as "a celebrated English divine," who applies to the Jews, and argues from the application with a view of sustaining a system, a Hebrew word which is never used of them, but always of the Gentiles. Then again, another interpreter of prophecy calls his reader's attention in a particular passage to a pronoun as very important, and to which he attaches particular emphasis; and when we examine the Hebrew original, we are surprised to find that it contains no pronoun at all, and that this word, so important to be noted in order to bring out the full meaning of the prophet, has been added by the translator !*

This necessary qualification of an interpreter requires also an ability to distinguish between prose and poetry, between proper language and figurative. It is sometimes no easy matter to make this discrimination. Much depends on

* Note XXIII.

natural feeling, much on cultivated taste, and very much on careful observation of Scripture and prophetic usage. It is in this last particular, I apprehend, that interpreters have frequently erred. They have explained literally multitudes of declarations which, in all probability, are figurative of ideas entirely different from those assumed by the literal expositor to be the inspired prophet's meaning. They have explained in detail, and thus have applied to various minute points of history, particulars which are nothing but circumstantial amplifications, illustrating some general view which the prophet intends to impress upon the mind of his reader. I have shown, in a former discourse, how necessary it is that the expositor should rightly appreciate the figurative character of the prophetic language, in order to enter into the spirit of his author, and shall therefore at present restrict my illustrations to the other point.

The subject predicted may be the government of the Messiah. Its nature and character, the mode of administering it, the happy consequences resulting, are all expressed by representations taken from objects and usages well known. He is commissioned by God, and endowed with ability to act the part of a righteous judge, and a kind and equitable ruler. Spiritual talents of various kinds are imparted to him. He is the protector of the poor, and

his avenger against the tyrannical oppressor. Righteousness and happiness are to be general, and he is to be universally reverenced. The inhabitants of barren wastes shall submit to him, and all kings shall do him the oriental homage of offering costly presents. Every day his grateful subjects shall pray for him. The productions of the soil are to abound beyond all precedent. Wild and noxious animals are to change their nature, and mingle in kind and loving union with those whom their cruel and savage passions would prompt them to destroy. Neither hunger, nor sickness, nor death, nor any kind of evil, shall then molest the favored subjects of this heaven-commissioned King. They shall dwell forever securely and happily in the land promised as the everlasting rest of the true Israel.* Who now does not see that the single thought of the prophet is that of unmingled and permanent blessedness, and that all these particulars are poetic and beautiful specifications and adornments of the one general idea? Whether they shall all be realized or not, is immaterial as regards the fulfilment of the prediction.

Or again, the topic is that of the utter overthrow of the enemies of God and his church, depicted, it may be, under the symbol of the destruction of Babylon. Then its walls are to

* Ps. lxxii. Isa. xi. lxv. 18–25. Ps. xxxvii. 9, 11. Isa. lvii. 13. lviii. 14. lx. 21.

be dismantled. It shall become a desolation. Every living being therein shall be destroyed. Not a traveller shall pass through it. It shall never be inhabited, except by wild beasts, dragons and satyrs. Its fall shall put out the stars, darken the sun and moon, shall shake the heavens, and move the earth out of its place.* The leading thought is what the prophet intends to impress, and that is, utter and irretrievable ruin. If an accurate literal fulfilment in every minute particular be demanded, it will be impossible to maintain the truth of the prophecy.

The practice of amplifying a general idea, though common to all poetry of an elevated kind, may be said to be peculiarly characteristic of Hebrew poetry. We see it in the song of praise poured forth by the grateful mother of Samuel, and repeated by the meekly submissive and highly favored Mary. The one thought of gratitude to God as the beneficent author and controller of human destinies, exalting and depressing at his pleasure, is the animating spirit of the thanksgiving, and it is developed in various particulars.† The same principle may be applied in part to the impre-

* Isa. xiii. 9, 10, 13, 20, 21, 22. xiv. 23. xxxiv. 10, 13, 14. N. B. These last three verses relate to Idumea, but the principle involved is that of the text. Jerem. l. 39. li. 26, 37.

† See 1 Sam. ii. 1–10. Luke i. 46–55.

catory Psalms, and also to the minute description of the symbolical temple of Ezekiel and St. John. As in figures and parables the main points are to be principally noted, circumstantial details being introduced merely to give consistency and seeming probability to narration; so in prophecies, it is the leading thought which imbodies the prediction.*

While this is generally true of prophetic announcements, it is not to be doubted that we do find occasionally a very minute particular most strikingly verified in the facts of history.† Still this cannot militate against a principle which prophetic revelations in general demonstrate to be well founded.

Another requisite of a competent interpreter of prophecy, is a thorough and minute acquaintance with Old Testament history. Irrespective of any examination of the writings of the prophets, it might reasonably be presumed that men of their character and condition, full of the one idea of their own covenant relation to the God of their ancestors, and the consequent fulfilment of his ancient promises, would love to refer, on all suitable occasions, to the story of their venerated progenitors, and to draw therefrom illustrations of the subject on which they were discoursing, and would naturally, and even unconsciously, adopt the very language of the inspired documents that con-

* Note XXIV. † Note XXV.

tained the narratives. And such is really the case. It has been shown in a preceding discourse, that facts of Hebrew history are often made the basis of prophetic announcements or illustrations; and it might be shown further, that occasionally the very language of the narrative is employed, proving most conclusively the antiquity of the historical document, the accuracy of the prophetical writer, and his firm conviction of the fulfilment of the prediction contained in the ancient record.* And it might further still be shown that later prophets quote the language of former, when both are predicting the same general blessing.†

But a knowledge of Old Testament history is also necessary both to make clear and to confirm certain prophetic announcements. I refer especially to that contained in the historical records of events which transpired after the settlement in the promised land. It is impossible to understand the allusions of the prophets and their developments of the great theme which constituted the general burden of their discourses, unless we become familiar with the narratives in the Books of Judges, Samuel and Kings. The harmonious union of all in the peaceful kingdom of the Messiah, is expressed

* Comp. Ps. xxii. 28. lxxii. 17, with Gen. xii. 3. xxviii. 14. xxii. 18.

† Comp. Ps. ii. 8. lxxii. 8, with Zech. ix. 10; and Ps. xxii. 29, with Obad. 21.

by the evangelical prophet in these words: "The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and those of Judah that are adversaries shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."* Former history throws light on the representation. Ephraim is often used to denote the kingdom of Israel, that of the ten tribes who revolted from the older authority of the house of David, through the influence of Jeroboam, subsequently to which event the two kingdoms were frequently engaged in war. But this revolt did not originate the hatred. On the contrary, it sprang, most probably, out of a state of hostile feeling which had been cherished for ages, though doubtless it increased this hostility in a very great degree. This feeling displays its excitable character in the reign of David, when a "fierce" quarrel arose between "the men of Israel and the men of Judah," on occasion of showing attentions to the king after the rebellion of Absalom had been subdued.† And indeed the same bitterness and rabid hatred between the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, shows itself as early as the time of Jephthah, when the latter cruelly massacred multitudes of the former at "the passages of Jordan."‡ Attention to these particulars of Hebrew history places the prophet's representation of the mu-

* Isa. xi. 13.

† 2 Sam. xix. 41–43.

‡ Judg. xii. 5, 6.

tual love of Messiah's subjects in the clearest and most beautiful contrast with former long-cherished hostility. And the eagerness with which they will wage a holy warfare with sin and Satan, and all the enemies of their divine Lord, is graphically described under the figure of attacking in united band the Philistines and other inveterate foes of the Hebrew nation.*

A minute and careful attention to the history often removes objections which have been urged against the accuracy of certain prophecies. Thus, for example, it has been objected, that the language of Isaiah, "within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people,"† is not consistent with the fact that the kingdom of Israel expired about eighteen years after the time in which Isaiah spake, when an Assyrian monarch put an end to the dynasty in the person of the last king, Hoshea. But the prophet's inspired vision penetrates far beyond this proximate event. Subsequently to this, the inhabitants were removed into certain countries of Asia, the land lay desolate for many years, and long afterwards a later Assyrian monarch introduced a colony of his own subjects from Media and other parts of his kingdom, and settled them in the wasted grounds of the Israelites. Then the prophecy became fully verified, and "Ephraim was broken so as not to be a people." And again, it has

* Isa. xi. 14. † Ib. vii. 8.

been objected by the same authority, that the prophecy which relates to Mahershalalhashbaz was not accomplished. The prophet announces that "before the child should have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the spoil of Samaria should be taken away before the king of Assyria."* The objector affirms, on the contrary, that Samaria was not taken and spoiled by the Assyrians until about eighteen years afterward, when the city was captured by that power. But he assumes that the conquest and pillage of the *city* are what the prophet means; whereas the connected history in the second Book of the Kings shows clearly that his prediction relates to an early period of Assyrian aggressions, when many cities of the *country* of Samaria were seized by the eastern oppressor, foreboding, doubtless, that the time was not far distant, when the capital city itself should fall into the hands of the aggressive desolator.† The objector has erroneously supposed that the prophet is speaking of the city, whereas he refers to the calamities of the country in general which preceded its conquest.

Further, in order to explain rightly any particular prophet, it is requisite to obtain as good a knowledge of his peculiar circumstances and those of his times as can be obtained. The reasonableness of this requisition is self-evident. Although the predictions of the future which

* Isa. viii. 4. † Note XXVI.

the prophet announces are, indeed, altogether beyond his own natural unassisted powers, and communicated by the divine Spirit that animates him, yet the form of the communication, the imagery in which it is clothed, the illustrations by means of which it is cleared up and impressed, the symbols employed to bring it the more graphically before the mind of the reader, and, in a word, everything of this sort, which may be considered as its garb and dress, depends upon the education, habits, associations, feelings, and whole mental, intellectual, and spiritual character of the individual prophet, which must therefore be known and kept in view on various occasions. Both as a divine teacher of the true religion and as a seer to look into the ages to come, it is plain that the influence by which he is guided is not destructive of his own powers, whether of native genius, or as strengthened by education. Consequently it leaves him in the free exercise of his imagination, of his mental faculties, and natural feelings. These may be chastened and controlled by education, discipline, society, and various other causes; or may run wild, as it would appear to a cold western reader, in all the luxuriance of oriental nature, splendid in its seeming extravagance. The style of each is formed, as in other cases, by the usual circumstances, and therefore in some it is purer, or more sententious, or more ornate, or more sublime, than in

others. The necessity of being brief prevents me from entering into any detail. Otherwise it would be easy to show, that the same general idea is expressed by one prophet in language drawn from the associations with which his own age had familiarized him, and from his civil or religious condition; and by another in phraseology which is evidently the production of a different period and of very different influences. In one also we may observe an acquaintance with the ways of the then cultivated and courtly society; while another speaks the same general truths in the language of the plain good sense of one, who had mingled with his associates in the ordinary walks of life. The writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Zechariah, supply abundant evidence of the truth and importance of this remark.

Lastly, the competent expositor of prophecy must have taken a calm, unprejudiced, extended, and truly philosophical, that is, intelligent and Christian view, of general history, and especially of the history of the church, both before and after the coming of Christ.

By such a history of God's church, I do not mean a meagre outline of names and dates, determining the chronological and consecutive rise, progress and termination of characters and establishments, much less a detailed account of schisms and heresies, of aggressions by powerful individuals or communities or

ranks, upon the rights and privileges and consciences of men, comprising the various persecutions and interminable quarrels connected therewith. I mean the general religious condition, both doctrinal and practical, in past ages, of the entire Christian commonwealth throughout the whole world, under all its diversified forms, aspects, relations and human-imposed names; not the history of a party or a sect, but a view of the spiritual state of the entire body of Christ wherever existing and in whatever circumstances, particularly as exercising its legitimate influence. Such a history, I mean, as seizes upon the living and operative reality of the church, moving in and acting on the surrounding world according to its condition at any period; such a one as develops the principles that govern it, the doctrines that characterize it, with the motives, influences, hopes and expectations, that propel it onward in its antagonistic course of opposition against whatever would obstruct the free passage and unbounded influence of truth and righteousness. It is the church considered in this light that divine prophecy regards, and the expositor who would rightly interpret the prophetic promises and the predicted glories of the symbolized Zion, must rightly understand what aspects of that community the ever-developing prophetic word continually has in view as its leading and prominent and comprehensive topic.

II. I proceed to consider with suitable brevity the moral qualifications essential to the interpreter of sacred prophecy. The remaining time will merely permit me to note them; a full discussion is impracticable.

It is hardly necessary to say, that the first and most important of these requisites is a true religious character. This, of course, is essential to a proper and successful examination of any portion of God's "most holy word." But perhaps it is particularly so in reference to its prophetical parts. Here the mind should be especially under the control of right influences, that its thoughts and reflections may be rightly directed, and in harmonious accord with the nature of that divine and holy One, whose purposes and their gradual developments it is the province of prophecy to unfold. The deeper the religious feeling of the expositor, the greater is the probability, other things being equal, that he will be under the guidance of the Spirit. It is the promise of the Master, "If any one will do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Indissolubly allied to this qualification is a firm conviction that the prophecies of the Old Testament are of divine origin. It is a very remarkable fact, and particularly exemplified during the last hundred years, that sacred Scripture has been, to an extensive degree, the subject of critical examination and most learn-

ed comment, by men who do not admit the first principles of revealed religion. Men whose philosophy denies the reality, and in some cases even the possibility, of miracle or inspiration, have devoted their lives to a critical and exegetical examination of that holy book, the authority of which is based on these two principles, which the book itself everywhere avows and claims. The Bible is treated simply as a venerable record of remote antiquity, interesting and important in its bearing on the history and condition of man in past ages, and on their religious, intellectual and social characteristics. Philological investigation is also one of the various motives which have had influence in producing this anomaly. Learning, taste, genius and critical acumen, are often displayed in a very high degree by this class of commentators. But they deny that, properly speaking, the Bible is the word of God. They are willing to admit inspiration in some parts of its contents, but it is the inspiration of the poet or the orator or the genius, not that supernatural influence of the divine Guide which communicates truths that could not otherwise be discerned. Such an influence is denied as unphilosophical. Now it is very possible that expositors of this class may perceive and explain the true philological meaning of the words commented on; but the very nature of their principles necessarily leads them to invent groundless theories inconsistent with

fact, and must frequently warp their minds, and prevent them from catching the view of writers, with whose inward moral nature they have but little sympathy, and whose governing principle they repudiate. On the other hand, if the interpreter be imbued with the sentiment, that the predictions he is endeavoring to explain are really the productions of God's Holy Spirit, he must feel something of an awful consciousness of responsibility in the undertaking, somewhat proportioned to the elevated character of the subjects which engage his attention. He is deeply impressed by the consideration that he is searching those oracles which "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Another essential qualification in an interpreter of prophecy is a sacred regard to truth. It may seem quite superfluous to make so self-evident a proposition the subject of a distinct statement. Truthfulness ought to enter into everything human. The whole conduct, the individual act, the every word and thought of an honorable man, are presumed to be suggested and moved by this main-spring of moral life. General opinion has agreed to proscribe the unworthy person who does not scorn to lie. And yet, such is the influence of passion, prejudice, long-cherished opinion, early education, local associations and external influences, that not a few even of good men succumb to their power, and

consciously or unconsciously are led by their soft yet irresistible sway, to modify, at least, if not to keep back or misrepresent their convictions. We have only to observe the versatility of profession and views, which in various ages has characterized men distinguished in the history of the church, to perceive the truth of this. Steadiness, consistency, perseverance in maintaining one's settled principles in spite of all temptation to the contrary, are virtues of no ordinary grade, traits of character which it is much easier to admire than to cultivate. A sacred regard to truth comprises thorough honesty of purpose. The interpreter who is really governed by this principle, and therefore sets the truth always before him, experiences that she is at his right hand. He is not moved by interest, personal feeling, the demands of party, or any similar influence. He feels that he has "a great work" to do, and, like the patriotic and noble-minded Nehemiah, he "cannot *come down*."* There is something in the consciousness of being governed altogether by right motives, and of being right also in the view taken and in the reasoning and illustration which are to support it, which makes a man independent of everything without him, and raises him above the influence of interest, authority, private friendship, or anything but the truth, the sacred, inviolable truth. In more senses than

* Neh. vi. 3.

one are the golden words of our Lord most memorable: "THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."*

If, now, the interpreter of the prophetic word is rightly under the influence of the principle stated, he will readily admit that candor in acknowledging the results already gained, is another requisite. Truth, although, like law, its original seat is the bosom of God, whence it first emanates, is nevertheless in its progress among men frequently and greatly impeded, and consequently is slow in its advances. The requisite just mentioned presumes in the interpreter a conviction of the truth and practical importance of those before stated, and a belief that under their influence, somewhat of the divine mind, imbodied in the prophetic word, has been clearly ascertained. The principle, therefore, calls upon the interpreter not to lay again the foundation already settled, much less to weaken or undermine it in order to prepare the ground for some other, but rather to go on to perfection, endeavoring to develop more fully the nature and meaning of truths into which "angels desire to look."

But, after all, it is a melancholy fact, that a man's most devoted efforts, though directed in accordance with, and under the influence of the intellectual and moral principles before stated, and though resulting in the development

* John viii. 32.

and illustration of inspired truth, are notwithstanding often despised and neglected. The interpreter must therefore endeavor to maintain as far as possible a temper of mind, which may enable him to disregard the sneers of the ignorant and malicious, and which may also furnish him with fortitude and patience to bear the censures and accusations of the uninformed yet well-meaning children of prejudice, and, what is still more difficult to a sensitive mind, the neglect of those who might be expected to feel interest in the subject, and in sincere efforts to illustrate it. All this he must look for as a necessary consequence of our present imperfect condition. Little-minded men—men who cannot think except under the influence of some long-cherished system, who all their life-time have habituated themselves to look at intellectual and religious topics merely in one dim light; men who are one-sided, neither knowing nor caring what can be objected to the system which they have been brought up in,—can hardly be expected to be in a condition rightly to appreciate such efforts and results as those under consideration. But the indifference, or even the prejudiced opposition of such men, must not influence the resolution of the honest interpreter. It is his province to ascertain and to announce THE TRUTH. The purity of his intention, and the nobleness of his object, must be to him the substitute for every other species

of encouragement. Thus sustained, he must proceed in the pathway of truth, confidently believing that sooner or later prejudice and ignorance will yield to its sway. MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PRÆVALEBIT.

And this consideration leads me to remark, lastly, that the interpreter of sacred prophecy must, above all things, cherish a desire to advance the glory of God, by contributing to throw light upon his holy word. The bare statement of the necessity of this moral qualification, is sufficient. It requires no proof, as no man of reflection can think of controverting it. It is the rule of Scripture, that whatever we do must be done to the glory of God. And if this governing principle extends to the less serious actions of life, much rather must it apply to so important an effort as that under consideration. Beware, then, not to suffer any lower principle to influence your minds in the examination of God's prophetic word. Be not governed by any personal consideration, by any wish to strengthen a favorite tenet, though it be true and orthodox, though it be even a part of the very foundation of divinely revealed doctrines. As "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," so neither can the deduction of the most important truth, by illegitimate means, or from premises that do not warrant such result, advance the glory of Him whose very being is infinite and unmingled verity.

Who, then, is sufficient for these things? If such intellectual and moral qualifications are essential in order to fit one for interpreting rightly the whole body of Scriptural prophecy, how few comparatively are fully competent to the task! An able professor of Sacred Literature, in a discourse marked by sound discrimination and learning, has employed the following language: "In enumerating the intellectual qualifications necessary, I have perhaps convinced you, that *it is impossible to be a theologian.* In the highest and most comprehensive sense of the word, I do not know but it may be so. I shall have done some service, if I have convinced you, that it is no easy thing to acquire those qualifications which a theologian, in the more popular sense of the word, may be expected to possess."* The remark is peculiarly applicable to prophetic interpretation. If I have succeeded in showing you that certainly no trifling amount of intellectual and moral preparation is required to qualify for such an undertaking, my efforts will not have been useless.

Two good results will follow. *First*, you will have learned that the great mass of so-called expositors of prophecy are incompetent guides, and therefore that you ought not to rely on

* Inaugural Discourse, delivered before the University in Cambridge, Aug. 10, 1819. By Andrews Norton, Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature. P. 37.

them with implicit confidence. *Secondly*, you will have learned to "be swift to hear," yet "slow to speak," in view of God's purposes, and the revelations of them; to be quiet, patient, thoughtful, submissive; yea, to be even timid, childlike, overwhelmed with awful reverence, thankful for what knowledge he may be pleased to impart, and faithfully trusting his wisdom and goodness in regard to those secret things which lie deep yet secure in the profound immensity of his infinite benevolence. And, when you shall have thoroughly learned these priceless lessons, you will have acquired something of that wisdom which the wisest of men so often eulogizes and inculcates; that wisdom, which one of the wisest of uninspired men most beautifully and most poetically describes in the following simple yet sublime diction: "She is the breath of the power of God, and the pure effluence of the Almighty's glory; therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the ray of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. In all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars; compared with the light, she is found to be superior."*

* Wisdom of Solomon, vii. 25–29.

DISCOURSE VIII.

JAPHETH IN THE TENTS OF SHEM.

God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.—Gen. ix. 27.

The prophecy of Noah, with its connected circumstances, suggests considerations of much interest and importance. The narrative relates that the patriarch had become intoxicated, and in this condition was discovered by one of his children indecently exposed. Instead of concealing the unhappy result of a parent's weakness, he improperly and irreverently informed his brothers, who acted with pious and filial regard towards their unfortunate and erring parent. Roused from the deep sleep of his intemperate indulgence, and informed of the respective conduct of his sons, the aged man invokes a blessing on the two, and predicts the inferior condition of the other. It is hardly necessary to remark that, in accordance with general prophetic usage, the posterity of his sons are intended by the inspired father. When, therefore, in denouncing a curse on the descendants of Ham, he designates them in the

line of Ham's own son, the prediction is the same as it would have been had he employed the father's name. And most probably that of his son Canaan was substituted, with the view of encouraging the chosen people in their divinely directed efforts to conquer and expel the Canaanites.

The curse denounced is not only introduced separately, but also in connection with the blessing invoked and promised to the other brother. "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant."

It is worthy of note that the sacred historian relates this blemish in the character of the second father of the human race, without a single word of comment. To infer that therefore he did not regard it as censurable, would be altogether unwarranted, and utterly at variance with correct views of the characteristics of sacred history. He does not scruple to relate the faults of his most eminent personages; thus presenting a warning to all subsequent ages, and also a proof that his statements may be implicitly relied on.

But are these words of Noah predictive? And if so, does the Spirit of God rest upon an intemperate man? While we are cer-

tain that we must answer the former question in the affirmative, the latter admits of no other than a negative reply. It is impossible to prove that Noah was an intemperate man. The narrative confines itself simply to one act, and we rightly incur the charge of "bearing false witness," if we presume to add thereto. The connection in which this one act is introduced, seems also to justify the conclusion, that it stood alone in the life of that "preacher of righteousness," of whom we read that he "walked with God." It is said that he "began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard." Inconsiderately, as it would seem, and probably ignorant of the natural effects, "he drank of the wine, and was drunken." This precedes the statement already made. Then follows the prophetic announcement. It would be incongruous in the highest degree to suppose that habitual intemperance could be introduced or implied in such association. All seems evidently to intimate that the fact referred to was not indicative of character, but merely an incidental circumstance, and unexpected by the venerable man himself. The divine historian, elevated above all apprehension of calumnious impertinence, trusts to the gradual yet certain influence of truth, confident that his honest readers will draw no conclusion from one isolated fact, contradictory to what must necessarily be drawn from those general

representations, which appear with luminous perspicuity in every page of his instructive narration.

I propose, in the present discourse, to examine the prophecy respecting Japheth; to confirm its meaning by some other prophetic illustrations; and to draw from the subject some practical inferences.

I. "God shall enlarge Japheth." It is not unusual for the Hebrew prophets to utter their predictions in language which manifestly alludes to the meaning of the name by which the prominent party is designated. Those who are acquainted with the original will immediately perceive the allusion, which of course must escape the notice of the uninformed reader. The very first declaration of Jacob's prophetic eulogy on Judah, will immediately occur to the mind of every reader of the Hebrew Bible, as a sufficient proof and apt illustration of the remark. And it applies to the passage before us, although it is impossible so to translate it as to make this evident to the merely English reader. Taking the term in one form of the Hebrew verb, some have translated it thus: 'God shall *entice*, or *allure* Japheth, so that he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.' But this is a low sense of the promise, not in accordance with the dignity of the subject. Neither does it contain any allusion to the historical fact of the prodigious number and widely extended

settlement of Japheth's posterity. The most ancient and general authority, and that which is deservedly regarded as entitled to the highest consideration, unites in supporting the sense of the word as given in our English translation, "God shall *enlarge* Japheth." This meaning agrees best with the grammatical form of the expression, and also with the real fact. The descendants of Japheth have spread themselves over all Europe and America. They have effected settlements of vast and daily increasing extent, power and influence, in many parts of Asia and Africa. "History is the interpreter of prophecy," in the well-authenticated fact that *God hath enlarged Japheth.*

But what is the meaning of the next clause of the prediction? "He shall dwell in the tents of Shem."

Shem was the father of the great body of the Asiatic nations. They are his lineal descendants, who spread themselves over the Eastern quarter of the world. Greeks, and more western people of the line of Japheth, often successfully invaded the posterity of their ancestor's brother, conquered their territories, drove away or subjected the inhabitants, and lorded it over the oppressed children of Noah's eldest* son. On these grounds, and others of a similar kind, the prophecy has been thought to mean simply this: that God would so enlarge Japheth, that

* Note XXVII.

he should, in course of time, even prevail in a very considerable degree over Shem, whose posterity should succumb to the more enterprising and more widely extended descendants of his brother, in this particular more highly favored. But this view of the prediction lies open to an objection not easily removed. Is it credible that, after recognizing Jehovah as the God of Shem, and blessing him as such, which implies also a corresponding blessing on Shem himself, the inspired father would immediately add a clause predictive of opposition between the two races, and partial overturning of the one just blessed in so remarkable a manner, in order to make way for the wide dissemination and permanent settlement of the other? Does the prophecy in relation to Japheth so chill the predicted blessing which had just been poured warm upon the head of Shem? This is not probable. We must find a sense of prophecy which agrees not only with the historical facts, not only with the legitimate meaning of the words, but also with its own nature as known by analogy, in consistency, too, with the character and operations of its author. For these reasons we cannot admit this to be the patriarch's meaning.

Let us glance at another exposition. Shem was the ancestor of Abraham, and therefore of the favored and holy seed. With this fact in view some commentators have so explained the

passage as to make it in reality nothing but a continuation and development of the blessing pronounced on Shem. They paraphrase it thus: 'God shall indeed enlarge Japheth; his numerous progeny shall extend over a large portion of the earth; but still He shall dwell in the tents of Shem; He shall take up his abode among the descendants of Abraham; Israel shall be His habitation, Zion His resting-place, where He shall dwell forever; Jehovah shall be their God, and they shall be His people.'

And is this the *blessing* of Japheth? Here are numerous posterity, extent of possessions, wide supremacy of dominion, worldly honor and dignity of the highest kind, rank and distinction among the nations of the earth. But all are without God; all without the divine presence! And what are the riches of the world—what are the splendid palaces of the wealthy, with all their gorgeous and expensive furniture and decorations—what are the trappings of royalty—what the honors of distinction—what "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glories of them"—if all must be held on the condition of separation from the only source of happiness? The blessing of Japheth compels him to march forward in the world, extending almost without limit; but always and everywhere obliged to see in his favored brother's descendants, the "little flock" of the spiritual fold, the covenant people of Jehovah, the

beloved children of the heavenly kingdom, the holy church of the living God! And where is the blessing of such a benediction? The fuller the blessing, the wider, and deeper, and more withering the curse! To have the whole world, and to be without God, is but the mockery of a blessing. This was felt to be true even by the miserable Cain. The first murderer, the fratricide, for whom language affords no suitable epithet, vents the feelings of his horrors, when, in declaring that his "punishment is greater than he can bear," he utters the memorable words, "from thy face shall I be hid!" No, my brethren, *this* view of Japheth's blessing needs no examination. Criticism might set it aside on several grounds. It might be shown that the term *Japheth* may be the grammatical subject of the verb, just as naturally* as the phrase *Lord God;* and also that the blessing in each of the two verses most naturally relates wholly to one of the brothers. But it is unnecessary to enter into any detail. It is impossible that that can be the true meaning which divinely promises a *blessing*, and with a Satanic smile blasts with the deepest curse.

The blessing pledged to Japheth is undoubtedly that of numerous progeny to be widely disseminated over immense regions of the earth. This the words assert, and this the facts attest. Rapidly spreading themselves on all sides, the

* See Deut. xxxiv. 20. Ps. cxxviii. 5.

descendants of Japheth shall live in connection with those of Shem. The prophecy does not declare that the former shall conquer and expel or extirpate the latter, however true it may be that this was sometimes the fact. The language equally admits the interpretation which represents them as dwelling in harmonious and fraternal union, peaceably and mutually assisting in their domestic and other avocations. This is doubtless the general thought: 'Japheth's children shall intermingle with those of his brother Shem, and both shall dwell together in unity.'

But the principal point in which this unity is to consist, is certainly of a religious character. This, which is in itself wholly reasonable, seems to be suggested by the intimate association of this part of the prophecy with that which precedes. The patriarch had just invoked a blessing on Shem, recognizing Jehovah as his God. When, therefore, he immediately says of Japheth, that he shall dwell in his brother's habitation, he very plainly intimates that, thus connected, the religious privileges of the two should be identical; that their descendants should become united in the same covenant relation with Jehovah, the God of both; and that they should equally be citizens of that heavenly country alike desired by all the faithful. The prediction that flows from the lips of Noah announces that in due time Japheth's posterity shall be-

come members of that "one household of faith" which was founded by the selection of a part of "Abraham's seed" to be the chosen people; that Jews and Gentiles shall be associated together to constitute the one Israel of God. The Chaldee Targum of Jonathan, a most venerable and important Jewish testimony, gives us in brief language the same view: "His children shall become proselytes, and they shall dwell in the school of Shem."*

II. Let us now inquire whether the prediction thus elicited from the words of Noah is confirmed by other representations of holy Scripture.

The reader of the sacred oracles will find no difficulty in deciding this question in the affirmative. With more or less of clearness, prophecy to this effect pervades the whole Bible. Nothing less can possibly be meant by the divine promise made to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families"—and again, with somewhat more particularity, "In thy *seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Here the religious union and benediction, which was promised by Noah to his two sons, is so extended as to comprehend the posterity of the whole three. And so also in the last words of Jacob, "the gathering," or "obedience of the people," that is, 'the nations,' is promised to the authority that was to come through the line of Judah.

* Note XXVIII.

The Book of Deuteronomy and the Psalms abound with exulting declarations to the same effect, most appositely quoted by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans:* "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people;—for this cause I will confess unto thee among the Gentiles and sing unto thy name."

But the allusions to this subject which occur in several of the Psalms are too striking to be passed over with merely a general remark. Let us note a few. The second celebrates the glory of King Messiah, "set upon God's holy hill of Zion," with the promise also that "the heathen shall be his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession." "Kings and judges" are earnestly exhorted to receive him.† In the 18th, the monarch of Israel praises God for great deliverances, and avows his determination to "give thanks unto the Lord among the heathen," of whom, says he, "thou hast made me the head."‡ In the 22d it is said, that "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."§ In the 68th, "Egypt, Ethiopia, all the kingdoms of the earth" are prophetically called on to "sing praises unto the Lord."‖ The 72d predicts the general extension of Messiah's

* Rom. xv. 10, 9.
† Ps. ii. 6, 8, 10.
‡ Ps. xviii. 49, 43.
§ Ps. xxii. 27.
‖ Ps. lxviii. 31, 32.

kingdom even to "the ends of the earth," and declares that "all nations shall call him blessed."* In the 102d the restoration of Zion by Jehovah, and the fear of him by the heathen, are associated predictions. All the declarations and all the intimations of this religious union and harmony are so many developments of the promise announced by the second father of the great family of mankind, that "God should enlarge Japheth, and that he should dwell in the tents of Shem."

This interesting and important purpose of God is displayed clearly in the Psalms, and with increasing brightness in the subsequent prophets. The shortness of our remaining time compels me to limit its illustration more than would otherwise be desirable.

To begin with the very prince of the Hebrew prophets. What else than the religious communion of Noah's two sons with their elder† brother Shem, "saw" the son of Amoz, "when he beheld many people, all nations, flowing unto the house of the Lord, the God of Jacob," to be taught "his ways and to walk in his paths?"‡ This also is what the prophet means when he promises that "the Lord of hosts will make unto all people a feast,"§ when he speaks of the Messiah as "a light of the Gentiles,"‖ the author of "salvation unto the end of the

* Ps. lxxii. 8, 17. † See Note XXVII. ‡ Isa. ii. 1–3.
§ Isa. xxv. 6. ‖ Isa. xlii. 6.

earth."* In accordance with this same truth, he promises "the sons of the stranger that join themselves unto the Lord," that they shall be brought to God's "holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer," when "the Lord God will gather others to Israel beside those that are gathered to him."† Animated by the same feeling of true benevolence, he tells the chosen people that their "seed shall inherit the Gentiles."‡ Other prophets employ the same language. Thus Amos speaks of the restoration of God's ancient people: "That they may *possess*" (or *inherit*, for the original word is the same,) "the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen which are called by the Lord's name."§ What is the meaning of *inheriting*, *possessing* the nations? Does it import the conquest, devastation, subjugation of Gentiles to Jews? Do the Evangelical proclaimers of "peace on earth and good-will to men," foretell the approach of that blessed period, when the ancient people of God shall bathe their swords up to the very hilts in the blood of their enemies, those Edomites and Moabites and Ishmaelites, and the savage Gog and Magog, Scythian and unknown tribes of ruthless warriors? Is it thus that the descendants of the pious and filial Shem and Japheth are to dwell together within the same tents? Is this murderous hos-

* Isa. xlix. 6.
† Isa. lvi. 7, 8.
‡ Isa. liv. 3.
§ Amos ix. 12.

tility to mark the fulfilment of the most ancient and most gracious of promises? God forbid! O no, this cannot be! No interpretation can possibly be true which outrages the natural feelings of the heart. The implanter of human affections cannot deny himself. Since truth cannot contradict truth, we may be sure that such an exposition is radically wrong. Not thus did the holy prophet expect the seed of God's people to inherit the Gentiles. Let rather the equally holy apostle James,* be our authoritative interpreter. He teaches us that the union of Gentiles with Jews, in the one church of Christ, then begun to be established, is the prophet's meaning; represented indeed under a figure, but a figure equally natural and intelligible.† When the prophets speak of their brethren inheriting others, they intend to denote an incorporation with them as previously in possession, and the phrase implies benefit on the part of those thus incorporated. God's people are represented as taking possession of their converts, who thereby become closely united with them. In other words, what the prophets predict is exactly what the Apostle Paul explains, when he compares the Gentile converts to slips of a wild olive that had been inserted into the natural good tree; nor with the view of introducing into the uncontaminated plant antagonistic and poisonous juices, nor, on the other hand,

* Acts xv. 13–17. † Note XXIX.

of receiving therefrom repulsive and destructive influences; but to partake of the richness and fatness of the genuine old olive, to honor it for its support, and at the same time to strengthen its own growth and permanency, by a proper dependence, submission and faith.

Omitting a multitude of prophecies which might be adduced in support of the view under consideration, there is one passage in Isaiah so peculiarly striking, that I must, in conclusion, bring it most particularly to your notice. Like much of the language of the prophets in general, and especially of Isaiah, it is figurative, and the figures are drawn from the great event in the political and religious history of their ancestors, the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the passage through the desert, and the settlement in the land of Canaan. The prophet is speaking of the times of the Messiah. Like his prophetic brethren in general, he views them not in separate parts, chronologically distinguished, but in one great whole, the connection and continuity of each particular being marked by its nature and character, and not merely or chiefly by its proximity to the next in order mentioned. "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a

blessing in the midst of the land (or earth). Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."*

How instructive is this language of the noble-minded prophet. How wholly inconsistent is its sentiment with that miserable Jewish bias, of which even the Apostle Peter could not easily rid himself, which clings to the contracted opinion, that it is "an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation!"† How equally inconsistent with that less pardonable littleness of some narrow-minded Christians, who cannot bear to see any "casting out demons in the name of Christ and following not" them! They are either apprehensive of contamination, or fearful of acknowledging any degree of fraternity. And, my brethren, what a glorious trait does the so graphical stroke of the heaven-dipped pencil give us of the universality of this harmonious condition; when Israel's powerful and implacable enemy on the North and East, and Israel's great, inveterate and most ancient enemy on the South, fittest types of *all* Israel's enemies, shall associate in easy and most intimate connection with the once enslaved and slavish race, the people long hated, abused and injured! What a glorious view does it give us of

* Isa. xix. 23–25. † Acts x. 28.

that period, when "Israel shall be a blessing in the midst of the earth!" What a glorious view of the time (God hasten it in its day!) when Jehovah of hosts, the covenant God of Israel, shall favor with paternal benediction the repentant and believing opposers of his chosen, and shall say, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, with Israel mine inheritance!"

And now, in the light of these prophecies, to which multitudes of others of the same sort might easily be added, let us look at the facts of the case as developed in the Gospel and its history. Do they afford any evidence that Japheth has in some degree been dwelling in the tents of Shem? Do they show that this harmonious and religious incorporation and union has been formed, has grown and is still growing? What says the holy word? What says the incontrovertible fact?

Soon after the birth of Christ, the venerable wise men wended their course from the East, and adored in Bethlehem the infant spiritual Prince of the universe. Thus was he first manifested to the Gentiles, although indeed they were not of the race of Japheth. The faith of the Syro-Phœnician mother, of the centurion master, of the Syrians, in whose land the fame of Jesus had spread, and who brought their sick to be cured by him, are all illustrations of this predicted union. The conversion

of Cornelius, of the Ethiopian eunuch, and the reception of the gospel by the nations in various parts of the world, through the instrumentality of the apostles; the formation of churches consisting of Jews and Gentiles, narrated in the Acts of the Apostles and other authentic histories of the early propagation of Christianity, and referred to in the Apostolic letters; are so many indications that "the middle wall of partition," which had so long separated the posterity of one patriarch from those of another, and perpetuated mutual hostility, had at last been broken down, and that all, however diversified and widely separated, had become one in Christ Jesus. An examination into the early planting of the Gospel shows most conclusively that the first formed Christian churches were composed chiefly of Jewish converts, to whom accessions were made from among the Gentiles, until at length the latter predominated. The sons of Japheth dwelt with the sons of Shem. They even adopted many of the old family usages. In a multitude of instances, ecclesiastical regulations and forms of divine service, originally Hebrew, and therefore of Shemitic production and growth, were incorporated into their newly-formed religious communities by the descendants of Japheth. It ought never to be forgotten, that the number of Jewish and Israelitish conversions in the first century was immense. Thus the newly-

founded Gentile body was taken into the old Israelitish inheritance. And thus the original covenant people became the trunk or root that supported and invigorated the lately sprouting branches. Japheth and Shem have intertwined together to form that figurative mustard-tree of the great Teacher, whose body serves to sustain, and whose foliage to comfort and refresh.

Following the current of events, we see in the progress of Christianity great masses of Japheth's children "flowing" on to the Christian Zion, "the mountain of the Lord's house," and becoming incorporated with that holy body which had before been formed by the ancient covenant people who inherited the Gentiles. Gradually all Europe became converted to the faith of Christ, and dwelt peaceably and happily in those tents which had first been pitched, under divine direction, by the children of Shem. It is indeed much to be deplored, that the natural descendants of ancestors who had long lived in those tents, deserted the spiritual abode of their faithful progenitors, and sought out for themselves other habitations, cheerless and without comfort, hating and calumniating the more lately settled residents. No less is it to be deplored, that many of these persecuted and abused the natural descendants. And thus, most unhappily, it resulted, that the tents of Shem have been occupied chiefly by the progeny of Japheth. But a better state of

things is beginning to take place. The conversions of the last thirty years in Asia and the South Sea Islands, and the efforts now making in various parts of the Eastern world, serve to show, that he who inspired the patriarch will not forget to accomplish the prophecy in full. And we are encouraged to believe that the time is coming, when "the veil shall be taken away from the heart" of the old covenant people; when Israel shall be roused to emulation of the blessed condition of their Gentile brethren, and with joyous exultation, intermingled too with mourning at the spiritual sight of "him whom they have pierced," shall "kiss the Son," whom they have so long rejected; when "the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and shall turn away iniquity from Jacob, and thus all Israel shall be saved." And what shall this be, "but life from the dead."

According to the plan proposed in the outset of this discourse, I ought now to consider the subject in its practical bearings. But the time already occupied forbids me to enlarge. In conclusion, then, let me ask, have you any satisfaction in indulging faith in the view which has been presented to you, so far as it may accord with God's holy word? If you have not, it is no breach of charity to say, that you cannot have the mind of the holy prophets and apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But, if you have satisfaction in so hoping and

so believing; if your hearts do "burn within you," when you meditate on God's ancient promises to the "preacher of righteousness," and of the displays of it made in the later prophetic testimonies; then let the conclusion of your understanding, of your will, of your whole selves, be this—that, by the help of the God of Noah, you will give your aid in carrying out his gracious purpose, by a thorough devotion of yourselves to his service. I do not ask you to decide where, and under what circumstances, you will exercise your ministry in aiming at the glory of your Redeemer. That you ought to leave to his all-wise Providence. I merely ask you to resolve on this: that, wheresoever your future lot may be cast, whether here or elsewhere in our own country, or in remote lands of heathen ignorance, you will maintain one settled purpose, to do, by divine grace, all that may be in your power to advance the glory of God in the salvation of men. This is evidently the duty of all Christians, and specially of those who devote themselves to the sacred ministry. *Pray*, then, for this consummation. Pray the prayer that your Lord and Master hath taught, "thy kingdom come." Here you may ask in faith, confident that he heareth you, because the object of your prayer is in full accordance with his will. *Give*, then, for this consummation. Give of your property to advance the progress of God's kingdom both in

the church and in the world, that Japheth may dwell in the tents of Shem, and both embrace with fraternal affection the long outcast family of Ham. *Live* and *act* for this consummation. Promote the interests of religion in your own domestic circle, your own immediate vicinity; and, by the influence of your example, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

NOTES.

Note I.—Page 2.

A very complete view of these allusions and quotations is given in the Prolegomena to this Epistle of David Julius Pott, pp. 173–176. It may be found in the Novum Testamentum Græce perpetua annotatione illustratum; Editionis Koppianæ, vol. ix. Gottingæ, 1810.

Note II.—Page 2.

The 16th verse refers, most probably, to Christ's second advent. This interpretation agrees best with the expression "*power* and coming," which is equivalent to his powerful coming, and is in contradistinction to his state of humiliation while on earth. Compare Rom. i. 4, "the Son of God *in power*." It suits also the only other places in which the word occurs in St. Peter's Epistles, iii. 4, 12, "where is the promise of his coming?—the coming of the day of God," when Christ shall appear in glory.

Note III.—Page 9.

The discourse alludes more particularly to the view of the celebrated Dr. Arnold, whose remarks on prophecy are characterized by the good sense and acuteness of his well-disciplined mind. "History is especially ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως ('of private interpretation:') that is to say, what the historian relates of Babylon, is to be understood of Babylon

only; of the city so called on the banks of the Euphrates, and not of any other place more or less morally resembling it. But what Prophecy says of Babylon is κοινῆς ἐπιλυσεως (of general interpretation:) it does not relate exclusively, nor even principally, to the Babylon of History; but to certain spiritual evils of which Babylon was at one period the representative, and Rome at another, and of which other cities which may have succeeded to the greatness of Babylon and Rome, may be the representatives now. And thus the Babylon of History is only for a limited time, and in an imperfect degree, the Babylon of Prophecy. It is so for a limited time only, because the historical Babylon has long since perished; but the Prophecies in the Old Testament against it have been repeated in the New, almost in the very same words; so that the prophetical Babylon must have been in existence long after the historical Babylon had been destroyed. And only in an imperfect degree, because the language used respecting it is the exact opposite to that used with respect to Jerusalem; and as the historical Jerusalem never came up to the pictures of the holiness and happiness of the prophetical Jerusalem, so neither have we any reason to believe that there was any such peculiar and unmixed wickedness in the historical Babylon, as to make it the proper and ultimate subject of the denunciations uttered against the Babylon of Prophecy. Not the proper and ultimate subject, but the subject of them partially and in the first instance; as Rome was partially, also, in the second instance; and as other places may be, and I believe are, in the third instance: so that the prophecies, as I believe, will go on continually meeting with a typical and imperfect fulfilment till the time of the end; when they will be fulfilled finally and completely in the destruction of the true prophetical Babylon, the World as opposed to the Church. I wish it to be remembered, that I am by no means denying the literal and historical sense of the Prophecies relating to different cities or nations, but

only contending that the historical sense is not the highest sense: and that generally the language of the Prophecy will be found to be hyperbolical as far as regards its historical subjects, and only corresponding with the truth exactly, if we substitute for the historical subject the idea of which it is the representative. Babylon, in the Prophecies of the Old Testament, means undoubtedly the city so called in Mesopotamia; Amalek means the historical Amalek; Edom or Mount Seir signifies the historical people of Edom. And as it was a great blessing to belong to the Israel of History, because she was chosen to represent the idea of God's true people, so it was a great calamity to belong to the historical Babylon or Amalek or Edom, because they had certain points in them which made them be chosen to represent under its various forms the idea of God's enemies. But in neither case, was the representative or symbol of the idea the full and adequate expression of the idea itself."—Sermons, by THOMAS ARNOLD, D.D. Vol. I. Fourth Edition. London, 1844. pp. 395–397.

NOTE IV.—PAGE 40.

The reader may find some remarks on this subject in my Companion to the Book of Genesis, Note 19, pp. 183–196. In Note 21, pp. 197, 198, the various views of the original terms in which the promise is contained, are briefly given.

NOTE V.—PAGE 41.

"The first prediction was given in a promise adapted to man's forfeited condition, the promise of a Redeemer, who, *in some way not then explained*, was appointed to bruise the serpent's head, that is, to take away the tempter's triumph. To Adam was given a *hope of the redemption* of his race, with uncertainty as to the mode in which this end should

be effected."—See Discourses on Prophecy, by JOHN DAVISON, B.D. Oxford, 1834, 8vo. pp. 75, 77, 79.

"As the prophecy stands in the third chapter of Genesis, nothing appears to point out this particular meaning," (of "destroying the power of sin, and the redemption of mankind by Christ,) much less to confine the prophecy to it. This prophecy was to our first parents but very obscure; but a light shining in a dark place. All that they could certainly conclude from it was, that their case was not desperate; that some remedy, some deliverance, would in time appear; but *when*, or *where*, or by *what means*, they could not understand."—The Use and Intent of Prophecy, by THOMAS SHERLOCK, D.D. London, 1732, pp. 59, 65. Compare also p. 70.

NOTE VI.—PAGE 43.

The communication recorded in Gen. xii. 1, is undoubtedly the second, preparatory to Abram's removal from Haran to the land of Canaan. His first migration, which was from Ur of the Chaldees, had been mentioned just before in xi. 31. The original ought to be rendered, in accordance with its invariable meaning—*and the Lord said.* The reason which probably induced our translators to prefer the pluperfect tense, may be found in the work before referred to, Note 59, pp. 239, 240, where the true meaning of the text is defended against the objections of Rosenmüller.

NOTE VII.—PAGE 47.

The book on Genesis already mentioned contains a full examination of the various views which have been taken of this celebrated text, both in ancient and modern times. See Note 10, pp. 371–388.

Note VIII.—Page 58.

This extract from the Commentary of Abarbanel is accompanied by a note, in a work published by Stanford & Swords, in 1847, entitled, "Biographical Notices of some of the most Distinguished Jewish Rabbies, and Translations of Portions of their Commentaries and other Works, with Illustrative Introductions and Notes." See p. 196.

Note IX.—Page 62.

In Acts ix. 7, it is said, that "the men stood speechless, *hearing* the voice indeed, but seeing no one." In xxvi. 14, the voice is said to have been uttered "in the Hebrew tongue." This may help to explain the seeming discrepancy between ix. 7 and xxii. 9: "they that were with me *heard not* the voice." The original word rendered *heard*, may convey the idea of *perceiving distinctly*. In this case a sound somewhat confused may have been heard, (making an impression similar perhaps to that made on those of the by-standers referred to in John xii. 29, who thought "it thundered,") but not sufficiently distinct to enable the hearers to comprehend the meaning. Or the word may signify, as it is actually rendered in 1 Cor. xiv. 2, *to understand*. If Saul's attendants were composed of a Roman band, as is very likely, Hebrew would, in all probability, have been unintelligible to them.

Note X.—Page 63.

What the *Urim and Thummim* were, can only be conjectured. The reader who wishes to know the various opinions of the learned, may consult writers on Jewish Antiquities. It seems evident from Exodus xxviii. 30, that they were not identical with the twelve stones. The

words, which mean *lights and perfections*, that is, the most perfect illumination, may have been applied to the things themselves, in order to indicate the certainty and fulness of the divine revelations, whether communicated orally to the priest, or directly to his internal faculty.

Note XI.—Page 64.

See, for example, the instances of Abimelech, Laban and Balaam, mentioned in Gen. xx. 6, 7; xxxi. 24, 29; Num. xxii. 8–13, 20. Such cases did not escape the notice of the celebrated Maimonides.—See my Jewish Rabbies, pp. 233–235.

Note XII.—Page 65.

Thus we read, "the *vision* which Isaiah *saw*," Isa. i. 1; "the word (or thing) that he *saw*," ii. 1; "I *saw* the Lord," vi. 1; "a grievous *vision* is declared to me," xxi. 2; "the *vision* of Obadiah," i. 1; "write the *vision;* the *vision* is for an appointed time," Hab. ii. 2, 3. Gad is called "David's *seer*," 2 Chron. xxiv. 1. Ezekiel is said to be made "a *watchman;*" to see, as it were, the approaching evil, and to give warning, iii. 17, et seq. Compare Isa. xxi. 6, 8, lvi. 10. At the time when the ninth chapter of the First Book of Samuel was written, the word in common use was *prophet;* but during the period of which the author is narrating, the term employed was *seer*. See v. 9. Still, the writer does not mean to say that the name of prophet had never before been thus employed; for even the Pentateuch contains evidence that it was sometimes used to denote one who possessed the ability of predicting future events. See Deut. xviii. 22.

In accordance with this method of representing the future to the mind of the prophet who receives the divine communication, it is occasionally said that he is taken to some elevated position. Thus the whole scene intended

to be impressed on the mind, would appear like a collection or succession of real historical facts, actually taking place at the very time of the revelation. Thus, for example, after the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, Ezekiel, a captive in Babylonia, being about to receive a revelation of the establishment of a new temple, is "brought in the visions of God into the land of Israel, and *set upon a very high mountain*," xl. 2. The same mode of representation is employed in the Apocalypse: "He carried me away in the spirit to *a great and high mountain*, and showed me that great city," &c., xxi. 10. And there are not wanting able and orthodox commentators who apply the same principle of prophetic interpretation to the account given by the Evangelists, and especially St. Luke, of the last remarkable temptation of our Lord in the wilderness: "The devil, *taking him up into a high mountain*, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world *in a moment of time*," iv. 5.

Note XIII.—Page 68.

The language of the very learned and equally modest Pococke, is well worthy of the reader's attention. "*Vision* in that notion of the word in which it is here used, was that way whereby God did make known to his prophets and instruments, such things as he would have them declare concerning things to come, or any part of his will, by representing them to them *as plainly as if they saw them with their eyes and bodily senses*, in such resemblances which did make them known to them, that they might discover them to those whom he would have to know them: whether that vision were *corporàlis*, *imaginaria*, or *intellectualis*, as they distinguish them; *corporal*, when some appearance was represented to their bodily eyes; or *imaginary*, when such forms were deeply impressed on their imagination; or *intellectual*, by some intelligible image of the thing, representing clearly to the understanding that

which was to be revealed; and whether any such images were in somnis, *in dreams* or *trances*, or extra somnium, *without dreams*."—Commentary on the Prophecy of Hosea, by EDWARD POCOCKE, D.D., &c. Oxford, 1785, fol., p. 684.

NOTE XIV.—PAGE 72.

The names of the four most distinguished angels, those who, according to the Rabbies, are about the divine throne, are Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Michael stands on the right of the throne, Uriel on the left, Gabriel in front, and Raphael behind. The reader may find these particulars, and also the Rabbinical account of the origin of these names, in BUXTORF's Lex. Chal. Tal. et Rab., fol., 1639, under *Uriel*, Col. 46.

NOTE XV.—PAGE 75.

Isa. xx. 2–4. "*Naked*."—The same language is used of Saul in 1 Sam. xix. 24. But in both places it merely means, *having the outer garments off*, or, it may be, *a part of the inner also*. The same mode of speaking is used by old authority in the account of the disrobement of Richard the Third and Anne on the occasion of their coronation: "They put off their robes, and stood *all naked* from their waists up." And yet the ceremonial of the coronation of kings of France, describes the dress to be used on such occasions as "close-fitting tunics of silk, having apertures on the breast and between the shoulders," on which the chrism might be placed. That of English consecrations was most probably similar.—See Queens of England, by MISS STRICKLAND, vol. 3d, p. 249, Lea & Blanchard's edition, Philadelphia, 1847.

Note XVI.—Page 85.

The translation of the two portions which are introduced in the discourse, varies slightly from that of our English version. The reader who examines the original text will perceive that the variations are in strict accordance with it. They have also the sanction of the best Biblical critics and expositors. Some of the Hebrew verbs, although in the preterite tense, and so translated in our Bibles, are rendered in the present. It is hardly necessary to say, that this is supported by the usage of the language, and the authority of the best grammarians.—See Nordheimer's Hebrew Grammar, Book iii., chap. 12, sect. 952, et seq.; and Conant's Gesenius, Part iii., chap. iii., sect. 124, 3.

In the latter part of the quotation from Isaiah, I have substituted the phrase, *and they shall call him*, for the more literal translation, *and they shall call his name*. I have done this in order to express the true meaning of the prophet. An objection has actually been made to the application of this prophecy to our Lord, because he had no other name than Jesus, and was not called by any of the appellations here mentioned. A very moderate acquaintance with the phraseology of Scripture, is sufficient to show at once the ignorance of the objector. The prophet has no reference to the proper name whereby the Messiah should be known among his brethren of mankind, but to those appellations which should mark his character and nature.

In addition to the ordinary sense of giving a name to a person or thing, whereby it shall be called and designated, as Ishmael, Samuel, Jerusalem, and the like, the phrases *to call by a name*, *to be called*, *shall call his name*, and others of the same kind, are employed in two senses; and the true one must in every case be gathered from the context, the nature of the subject, and the analogy of Scripture. First, a name is imposed in consequence of the existence of a state of things corresponding with its import. Thus in

Isaiah viii. 1, 3, 4, the prophet names his son *Mahershalal-hashbaz*, that is, *hurries the booty, hastens the spoil;* and this in order to impress his prediction, that the time was fast approaching when the Assyrians should lay waste the countries of Israel and Syria, and carry off the booty. The fulfilment of the prophecy is recorded in 2 Kings xv. 29, and xvi. 9. In lxii. 4, it is said of Zion and Jerusalem, "thou shalt be called *Hephzibah*," that is, *my delight (is) in her*, "and thy land *Beulah*," or *married*, indicative of a condition expressed by what follows: "the Lord *delighteth in thee*, and thy land shall be *married*," that is, shall be blessed with numerous offspring, like a favored and prolific mother. Thus also the last words of Ezekiel are expressive of the divine presence to bless the new Jerusalem: "the *name* of the city shall be, *the Lord is there*." And notwithstanding all the efforts which have been made to give a different meaning to the latter half of Jer. xxxiii. 16, there is no reason to doubt that the same rule of interpretation applies there, and that the true translation accords with the view given in our English version: "*this is what they shall call her*, (Jerusalem,) *the Lord our righteousness*." The name designates the city, and indicates its religious and highly favored condition. Multitudes of other illustrations might be added, but those adduced are abundantly sufficient to settle the principle. It is of no essential importance whether the name be that by which the object is designated, or merely ideal and symbolical.

Secondly, the name often marks the character and nature of the individual to whom it is applied. A very remarkable illustration of this occurs in 1 Samuel xxv. 25: "As his name is, so is he; *Nabal* is his name and *folly* is with him:" *Nabal* being the Hebrew word for a foolish, wicked, ungodly man. Thus also the name of *Jesus* was given to our Lord to mark his office and character as a *Saviour*. On the same principle the appellations bestowed on the Messiah in Isaiah vii. 14, and ix. 6, and perhaps in Jeremiah

xxiii. 4, may be applied in order to mark his true divinity. Thus they may serve to confirm in the believer's mind the important truth of which he had before received undoubted assurance from other parts of Scripture.

I have chosen the noun *wonder* in preference to the adjective employed in our translation, because it accords better both with the form of the word and with those with which it is associated. Still, as it is a concrete, it must be understood in the sense of *the wonderful.* The word in Judges xiii. 18, which is rendered in the English version "secret," is radically the same, and ought to be translated the same way. This will be clear to any one who reads the passage in the original, where the root occurs in the form of a verb in the next verse, and is rightly rendered "did wondrously."

Note XVII.—Page 86.

The general principle of prophetic interpretation which is believed to be correct, is sustained in the body of the discourse by suitable examples. Particular modifications of it, with its various degrees of application, might be left to the reader's own observation. Still with the view of illustrating some of the remarks which have been made, I have thought proper to imbody in a note what could not very suitably be incorporated in a sermon or lecture.

1. I have remarked that the description may be equally or directly applicable to each of the particulars predicted. The prophecy of Balaam,* "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a star (that is a glorious prince,) out of Jacob, and a sceptre (or ruler,) shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners (or coasts, territories,) of Moab, and destroy all the sons of Sheth," (in other words, the tumultuous ones, the raging enemies,) is susceptible of an exposition exclusively

* Num. xxiv. 17.

to David. But prophetic analogy demands a broader interpretation; and this is supported by the oldest and most venerable authorities, and appears in the Chaldee Paraphrase of Onkelos, which comprehends the Messiah. Assuming the correctness of this view, it can hardly be questioned that some of the language of the prediction is equally, and all of it directly, applicable both to David and Christ. Thus also the promise: "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back:"* referring, as it well may, to the return of the Jews and Israelites to their own land, refers also to their return to God in the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah; and is equally applicable to each. In the 69th and 109th Psalms, David and his enemies, Ahithophel in particular, and Christ and his obstinate and impenitent opposers, and especially the noted calumniator who betrayed him, are equally intended, and the character and punishment of contemporaries of each are alike described. See Acts i. 16, 20; Romans xi. 9, 10. To these may be added such places as Isaiah vi. 9, 10, compared with Matthew xiii. 14, 15, and the parallel places in the other Gospels; Isaiah xxix. 13, with Matthew xv. 8, and Mark vii. 6.

2. The description is sometimes particularly applicable to the nearer and sometimes to the more remote. The book of Isaiah, and especially the last twenty-seven chapters, afford numerous illustrations of this remark. The tenth chapter predicts the escape of a portion of Israelites from the sword of the Assyrian, and their return to a peaceful and religious condition, comprising also the escape of a remnant in time to come from error and sin and ruin by their conversion to the true Messiah. Yet the nearer event is unquestionably that to which verses 20–23 are particularly appropriate. Thus also xl. 2, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," &c., is especially descriptive of the state of the

* Isa. xliii. 5, 6.

Babylonian exiles who had heard, or were soon to hear, the decree of Cyrus authorizing their return to their own land; and yet quite applicable to the natural condition of mankind, when called by the comfortable voice of Gospel invitation, and assured of pardon and forgiveness.

On the other hand, the language is sometimes better adapted to describe the more remote points of the prophecy. Thus the first verse of the 32d chapter of Isaiah, though applicable to the religious government of a pious monarch, such as Hezekiah or Josiah, is vastly more so to that of King Messiah, whose rule is to be accompanied by peace and happiness. The appeal and description in the 54th, though intended doubtless to represent the happy condition of the returned people, does still more vividly delineate the blessed state of evangelical privilege, which the Messiah would secure to them. And in the 56th chapter, while the promise of God, to "bring the sons of the stranger to his holy mountain, and make them joyful in his house of prayer," may have been intended to apply to any sincere proselytes to the Jewish religion, it is certainly most especially intended of the conversion of Gentiles to Christ, and of their union with their Jewish brethren in the one holy church which the apostles should establish. It is unnecessary to adduce any other examples.

3. The application of the principle to the one or the other exclusively must be admitted by every careful and candid examiner. Thus in Isaiah xli. 2, 3, 25, Cyrus is the only subject of the prophecy. That the Persian conqueror is meant, and not the patriarch Abraham, (as some have thought,) is evident from the context; and in xlv. 1–6 he is expressly named. In xlii. 6, 7, "The covenant of the people and the light of the Gentiles," can be none other than the Messiah. The same is true of xlix. 5, 6, and most probably of the whole section from lii. 13 to liii. 12, inclusive. It is plain that the prophet sometimes introduces the temporal and sometimes the spiritual deliverer sepa-

rately and distinctly. The connection of the two deliverances makes this perfectly easy and natural. And the prediction in ii. 2 et seq., with the corresponding one in Micah iv. 1 et seq., cannot possibly relate to anything but the establishment of Messiah's church and kingdom as a holy and favored resort for converts from every nation of the globe.

The principle next referred to in the discourse, namely, that the prophet's language is always limited to a single object, has been defended by interpreters of opposite sentiments. The rationalistic theory assumes it, and explains all such language as that under consideration of isolated facts, either contemporaneous with the author, or such as his sagacity might enable him to foresee. Rosenmüller remarks, that, to refer a passage, which literally and historically relates to David, in an allegorical and sublime sense to Christ, is altogether at variance with the rules of correct and sober interpretation, and that, if one should venture to treat any Greek or Roman author in this way, he would deservedly subject himself to the censure of all sensible persons.* He therefore thinks it sufficient to say of the words of Isaiah, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God;"† "This verse is accommodated by Matthew to John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the coming Messiah."‡ He does not stop to settle the important point which must be proved before the principle of accommodation can rightly and logically be applied.

To discuss this rationalistic theory of interpretation would be impracticable in a brief note. Some of its difficulties are suggested in the discourse. Its defenders are compelled to treat the Bible in a manner wholly inconsistent with historical evidence, and its own essential internal religious claims. A thoughtful and serious reader is not

* Scholia on Ps. xvi. Argumen. p. 367. † Isa. xl. 3.
‡ Scholia on Isaiah xl. 3.

likely to be seduced from the truth, by so superficial a system.

But the principle under review has developed itself in a very different form, and from motives wholly opposite. Believing that what has been called a double sense, or "a double interpretation," is wholly inadmissible, the indefatigable and learned Dr. Samuel Lee, D.D., late Regius Professor of Hebrew, and formerly of Arabic, in the University of Cambridge, has taken the very contrary ground to that of Rosenmüller, Gesenius, and the German Neologists. He maintains that the words of Isaiah before cited are to be understood exclusively of the coming of Christ, preceded by his forerunner, John the Baptist. "Isaiah xl. is thought to be such a prophecy," that is, one "that warrants a double interpretation, because, it is said, it *must* primarily relate to the delivery from Babylon. To show this we have considerable talent, poetical imagery, and some fine writing displayed. I doubt, nevertheless, whether the whole of this is not a mere delusion. The New Testament is quite sufficient to show that it applies to the times of Christ. Some passages which it contains seem also to show, that it never could have applied to the temporal Jerusalem." He then quotes from vs. 4, 5, 31, and concludes thus: "The Apostolic interpretation therefore is the just one; and every other ought to be rejected as worthless and mischievous."* But this is by no means satisfactory. No Christian doubts the truth of the Apostolic interpretation; but the admission of it does not prove that other points beside those which the Apostles have determined to be intended were not also comprehended within the original prediction. The question is not, whether the New Testament exposition of the prophet is true, but

* Dissertation on the Interpretation of Prophecy, London, 1830, p. 277. Dr. Lee has lately published a most learned and laborious work, entitled, An Inquiry into the Nature Progress, and End of Prophecy. The volume, which contains upwards of 500 octavo pages, comprehends an exposition of the Apocalypse.

whether he may not have comprehended something more than this exposition develops. And the whole series of the prophetic discourse proves that he did.

I have before referred to the remarks of Dr. Arnold on prophecy. They are well worthy of attention, and must suggest to the thoughtful reader interesting considerations. Still I cannot but think that he has laid down a principle, which, however true it may be in general, is yet not susceptible of universal application.

"Whatever scheme of interpretation we adopt for prophecy, it is at any rate necessary that it should proceed upon some fixed principle, and not be varied according to the supposed meanings of particular passages. It is consistent to follow throughout and exclusively a historical interpretation; it is consistent also to follow exclusively a spiritual interpretation; or again, it is consistent to adopt always the two together, and to say that every prophecy has its historical sense, and also its spiritual sense. But it is not consistent to interpret the same prophecy partly historically and partly spiritually: to say that in one verse David is spoken of, and in another Christ: that Jerusalem here means the literal city in Palestine, and there signifies heaven: that Israel in one place signifies the historical people of the Israelites, and in another place the people of God, whether Jews or Gentiles. This is absolutely foolish, and is manifestly a mere accommodation of the prophetical Scriptures to certain previously conceived notions of our own."*

In general this is all true. Some interpreters have selected certain passages from a continued prophecy marked by unity of subject, and applied them to one particular, at the same time explaining other passages belonging to the same connected series of discourse, of something entirely different. This is, as the author maintains, wholly gratuitous and without reason. But it seems to me that he goes

* Ubi Sup. 405.

too far in saying, that "it is not consistent to interpret the same prophecy partly historically and partly spiritually;" or, in other words, in denying that a literal sense may be given to some clauses of a discourse when the general current of its meaning is spiritual. The comprehensive character of the prophetic discourse must be taken into consideration in forming a judgment on such a point. The 49th chapter of Isaiah is undoubtedly a description of the true or mystical Israel, the church of Christ, its numbers, happiness, and settled condition in the divine favor. When, in the midst of this representation of spiritual blessings, we meet with such language as—"to cause the desolate heritages to be inherited; to say to the prisoners, Go forth;"—what valid objection can there be against understanding it literally of deliverance from Babylonian captivity, and resettlement in former habitations in Palestine? And also in liv. 3, where the subject and language are the same? And in the 102d Psalm, which seems undoubtedly to refer to the return of the Jewish exiles, why may not the 13th and 14th verses relate to the literal re-building of Zion at the expiration of the determined period of seventy years, although in close connection with the spiritual building of the mystical Zion, the church of the Redeemer? And the same remark is applicable to other places. Such statements may indeed be also intended as figures of the ultimate prophetic idea; but I can see no reason why they may not be also predictions of literal facts.

Note XVIII.—Page 93.

The prophecy in 2 Sam. vii., which is applied to our Lord in the Epistle to the Hebrews i. 5, is the same as that recorded in the parallel history, 1 Chron. xvii., and of which David speaks to his son Solomon in 1 Chron. xxii. 7, et seq. Attempts have been made to prove that the last portion relates to a prophecy "entirely distinct" from that

narrated in the two former. But the effort is an utter failure. The reader may consult Peirce's* note (n) on the text in Hebrews, who gives the substance of Whiston's remarks. None of his arguments will bear examination, and his translation of the Hebrew words in 2 Sam. vii. 14, is so forced that the merest tyro in the language must see at once that it cannot be defended: "*Whosoever shall commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men*, &c. The *whosoever* is to be understood of those who belonged to the Messiah, and were his people or subjects," p. 16.

Dr. Hales has endeavored to sustain a translation somewhat different, but even less defensible: "*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son; whosoever* (shall be concerned) *in injuring* HIM, *even I will chastise them with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of Adam.*" He calls this an attempt to render "this illustrious prophecy *more closely and correctly!*" Let any competent Hebrew scholar judge of such a rendering. The first reason given for condemning "the authorized translation as incorrect," is, that "the conditional particle *if* is wanting in the original"!! One might as well say, that in the expression, "as he was come nigh to Jericho," Luke xviii. 35, the particle *as* is wanting in the Greek. It is acknowledged, however, that "this grievous mistranslation and misapplication of the passage" arose from "our English Bible" having "followed the ancient versions."† Yet Dr. Hales has written largely and learnedly on Ancient Chronology, has analyzed a considerable portion of the Old Testament, and was a Professor of Oriental languages. In the present state of Hebrew knowledge, it were quite superfluous to show, that this so-called "more close and

* A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews, by JAMES PEIRCE of Exon. London, 1727.

† A new Analysis of Chronology, &c. by the Rev. WILLIAM HALES, D.D., Rector of Killesandra, in Ireland, and formerly Fellow of Trinity College, and Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Dublin, in three volumes, 4to. London, 1811, vol. ii. p. 367.

correct rendering" than that of "the ancient versions," and "our English Bible," (which in general is exceedingly good,) loses sight of the idiom of the language, and gives to the verb a meaning which it never bears. It is not to be wondered at that the Old Testament has been thought to be so uncertain as to admit of almost any meaning that may be desired, since it has been subjected to such criticism as this, and by learned men occupying distinguished positions. The literal sense of the original after the word *son*, is as follows: '*who, in his committing iniquity* (swerving from the right way), *then I will chastise him*,' &c. The idiomatic expression does indeed exclude "the conditional particle," but necessarily implies it. In the English translation the relative pronoun is omitted, simply because it is unnecessary; and it is evident that both this and the pronominal suffix must be understood of the same subject. To assume different ones is to take for granted the very thing to be proved. It is therefore impossible to interpret the prophecy solely of the Messiah; unless, indeed, a mere hypothetical case is imagined, such as that in Gal. i. 8. But this is wholly improbable, and, so far as I know, has never been affirmed.

Neither, on the other hand, can the prophecy be limited to Solomon. It were preposterous to apply to him exclusively such language as the following: "I will establish his kingdom—I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever—I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established for evermore."* It is possible that David may have attached perpetuity to Solomon's earthly kingdom, on the authority of this promise;† but the promise itself cannot be limited to the dominion of a monarch, whose imbecile son suffered ten of the twelve tribes to fall away from his allegiance in consequence of his boast of the exercise of contemptible tyranny. To admit, as Dr. Arnold does, that such expressions, so far as they

* 1 Sam. vii. 12, 13. 1 Chron. xvii. 14. † See 1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10.

regard a merely temporal kingdom, are "hyperbolical," is to give up the point in debate. Besides, the words in 1 Chron. xvii. 11, are at variance with such a theory: "I will raise up thy seed after thee, *which shall be of thy sons.*" Consequently, the seed or progeny intended cannot possibly be limited to any individual of David's royal children.

What now is meant by the house that this seed is to build? Certainly it is the temple that Solomon erected to the honor of Jehovah, the God of Israel. The narratives in Samuel and Chronicles are too clear on this point to admit of the least uncertainty. But the inquiry still remains, is nothing more intended than the building of the material temple on Mount Moriah? And the whole character of the Mosaic dispensation harmonizes with the answer, which is given also in the language of prophecy elsewhere, that along with the building of the material temple by Solomon there is intended also the establishment of the spiritual edifice by Christ; that is to say, his holy Catholic Church, which is to remain firm forever, against which the gates of hell itself shall not be able to prevail. This is "the Lord's house," the elevation and glory of which are predicted in Isaiah ii. 2 et seq.; the "house of prayer for all nations," Isaiah lvi. 7, Matthew xxi. 13. It were idle to limit this language to the temple, because of its containing a court in which a few Gentiles, in accordance with the Mosaic law, might worship the God of Israel. It is vastly more comprehensive. It teaches that the Jewish temple was a symbol of the church. And doubtless, in view of this sublime truth, our Lord uttered the memorable words: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." "He spake," says the divine interpreter, "of the temple of his body," John ii. 19, 21. Keeping in view the Scriptural connection between the literal body of Christ and his mystical body the Church, and also the symbolical connection of the Jewish temple with the latter, the language, which at first appears dark and inexplicable, becomes luminous

and full of meaning. It is as if he had said: 'The temple is, as it were, the residence of God, and my body is the divine habitation. By destroying the latter, you destroy also your temple, which is the pledge of God's dwelling with you. By raising up my body, which I will do on the third day from its dissolution, I build up again the real temple, the church of which your material building is the symbol. You demand a sign, (v. 18;) the great sign shall be my resurrection, followed by the rearing up of the spiritual temple.'

"And now we see that it was not arbitrarily or capriciously that so many passages in Scripture are applied to our Lord by himself and by his apostles; passages which according to the undoubted evidence of their context, were historically and literally spoken of some imperfect prophet or king or priest or people, in whom "alone" they had found, and could find, no adequate fulfilment."*

Note XIX.—Page 97.

Our Lord's language in St. Matthew from the 29th verse, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened" &c., to the end of the prophecy, has been thought to be intended exclusively of his future and glorious coming. But on this theory it is impossible to give any satisfactory exposition of the words in verses 29 and 34. "The tribulation" is that connected with the siege and conquest of Jerusalem, "*immediately after*" which the events next predicted are to follow. Hengstenberg endeavors to remove the difficulty by resorting to the state of prophetic vision. "How essential this property is to the nature of prophecy, appears from its characterizing even the predictions of Christ, and it is in a great measure owing to ignorance of it, that they have so often been falsely interpreted. To him also the events of the future presented

* Arnold ubi sup. p. 388.

themselves as in a large picture, and therefore in space, not in time. In describing its separate parts, as the destruction of Jerusalem and the day of judgment, the designations of time, which he employed, as *immediately*, Matthew xxiv. 29, relate to the succession of the objects *as they appeared to him in prophetic vision, and not as they were actually to take place.*"* But, granting that to the inspired mind of the prophet, and even to that of Christ himself, the predicted events did so appear; it cannot be conceded that either the prophet or his biographer would describe the coming of those events in terms, which naturally and almost unavoidably give the reader a false impression. The prophets may place such events in connection, but they never affirm their chronological proximity, as on this theory must be allowed to be done by St. Matthew. Neither do the descriptions which follow require its application. Such highly figurative and even hyperbolical language to express the overthrow of kingdoms abounds in the prophetic writings. See Hag. ii. 6, 7. Isa. xiii. 10, 13. xiv. 12, 13. Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8. Joel ii. 10, and, as antithetic, Isa. xxx. 26.

It has also been said that the Greek word in verse 34 rendered "*generation*" should be translated *race*, and that the language merely predicts the continuance of the Jews as a people until the period referred to. But this is a mistake. The Jews can hardly be said to have been a people, in the ordinary sense of the word when intended to denote national condition, since their overthrow by the Romans. And, even admitting that the Greek word is sometimes used by classic writers to express a race or nation, the New Testament invariably employs it in the sense of *generation, race of men subsisting in one particular age*, and in this meaning it occurs thirty-nine times. On the other hand, wherever the race as such is intended, we find the words for

* Christology of the Old Testament. By E. N. Hengstenberg, &c. Keith's translation, Alexandria, 1836, vol. i. p. 229.

nation, people, Jews, Israel, Hebrews, ten tribes, but never the term here rightly rendered *generation.*

The conclusion is unavoidable, that all the description preceding the 34th verse is susceptible of an interpretation bearing on the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and on other concomitant events.

The description of these events along with others yet in the distant future, which also are comprehended within this description, agrees with prophetic analogy. And, presuming that the same principle suggests the best explanation of the connection of Matt. xvi. 27, 28, I have so remarked in the discourse. It is not unusual to expound the last verse of the transfiguration, an account of which follows in the beginning of the next chapter. Bishop Porteus, in his excellent Lectures on St. Matthew, has argued in defence of this view.* But it appears to me quite improbable, to suppose that our Lord would publicly refer to a display of his glory such as the transfiguration, while he *limited* it to three chosen disciples, and charged even them to *conceal* it until his resurrection. Other difficulties attending this view might be urged, were it either necessary or expedient.

Note XX.—Page 105.

In illustration of the remark made in the discourse, the language in Gen. iii. 15, may be adduced: "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is universally granted to be figurative, except by a few ignorant or malevolent infidels, who would fasten on the words a merely literal meaning, in order to expose the subject of the prediction to ridicule and contempt. Such a meaning is so utterly at variance with the dignity of the whole book, and the sublime and awful circumstances of the context, that it can be maintained only by the most uninformed or depraved. Thus too the promise to Abraham in xviii. 10, that Sarah

* Lecture XIV.

should have a son, is expressed in language most beautifully figurative. Instead of the translation, "according to the time of life," which gives no very clear or intelligible meaning, the original words most probably convey poetically the idea of the same season in the next revolving year. As if the declaration had been; 'When this season of the year shall live again,' or 'revive;" equivalent to our usual prosaic phrase, 'about this time next year.' The book abounds with passages confirmatory of the statement in the discourse.

Note XXI.—Page 108.

See Exodus xv. 1, et seq.; Rev. xv. 3. The similarity of the short song of praise in Isaiah with the longer one in Exodus, must strike even the most inattentive reader. It appears in the use of the singular number at the commencement of each, and also in the choice of phrases and words. The latter half of the second verse in Isaiah is taken entirely from the former part of the same verse in Exodus. In both the word Jah occurs, in one as a substitute for Jehovah, and in the other, where it is translated Lord in the English, in addition to it. The suspicion of Houbigant and some others, that in the prophet the word is not genuine, is shown to be unfounded by the fact, that it is employed in the original poem contained in the history.

Note XXII.—Page 120.

It may perhaps be proper to inform the reader, that the language in the discourse is not vague and unfounded declamation, employed merely to round off an antithesis. It alludes to statements and interpretations actually maintained by certain expositors of prophecy, some of whom are distinguished not only by worth of character, but also

by varied and extensive learning. It would seem that a re-establishment of the old Jewish system, or something very like it, is expected, with this exception, that all nations are to unite with the ancient holy people in divine worship at the national altar. The locality of Solomon's temple is to be gloriously distinguished, and perhaps physically elevated; a splendid temple is to be built there, the materials of which are to be brought from Mount Lebanon, as formerly by arrangements made with Hiram; the feast of tabernacles is to be celebrated there every year, and those who refuse to attend are threatened with condign punishment; the most terrific extirpation of those who are hostile to the Messiah, is to be perpetrated by "the saints of the Most High, who are to possess the kingdom," and in this extermination of the ungodly, they are to follow the example of the divinely directed and aided conqueror of the Canaanites. I might swell this note by large and numerous quotations from many publications. But not to weary the attention and patience of the reader, I shall confine myself in the proof and illustration of what has been said, to two or three prominent authors.

The following passages occur in Mr. Irving's book on prophecy.* The author is commenting on Isa. ii. 1, the prediction of "the establishment of the mountain of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains, and its exaltation above the hills.—Some have inclined to interpret this literally, of a real elevation of Mount Zion to a height which shall overtop the mountains around, and command the sight of all the people from afar. And that there will be great changes in the physical face of that country, cannot be doubted, as the prophets have expressly declared it." In proof of such declaration he then refers to Zech. xiv. 4, 10; Jer. xxxi. 38, et seq.; and Ezek. xlv., xlviii. These, he says, "all *agree* with what is continually written in the Psalms and the

* Interpretations of Old Testament Prophecies quoted in the New; by a celebrated English divine. First Amer. Edit. Published by the Rev. Isaac P. Labagh, New York, 1845.

Prophets concerning *the melting of the hills like wax* before his presence! Ps. xcvii.; Mic. i. 4; Isa. lxiv. 1; Hab. iii. 6, et seq. There *must be some reality* in these prophetical expressions which so continually occur; some *remarkable geographical changes upon the face of the earth, and especially of the Holy Land; as in the darkening of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars, and the falling of the towers, and the reeling of the earth!*" "Though, *therefore*, I have been accustomed to give this passage of Micah, and the corresponding passage of Isaiah, a metaphorical interpretation—as significant of the supreme dignity which shall be given to Mount Zion, and the temple of the Lord thereon builded in the age to come, and the willing homage which all mountains and high places of the earth will yield to that where the Lord's glory abideth—*I am far from slighting the more literal interpretation* which hath been given to it by Ben-Ezra and others, that Mount Zion shall receive a super-eminence of elevation far above the mountains around, *to hold up to the sight of the nations the holy temple of the Lord.* But still I incline to think, that the glory of Zion in the eye of the prophet, standeth rather in this, that it shall acquire such a celebrity in those days, as shall bring low the most noted of the mountains of the earth, and the eyes of all men upon it, *being the centre of the worship of the whole world, as is set forth in all the prophets*, and most gloriously in the 60th chapter of Isaiah, where all nations, and not only so, but all the natural productions of the earth, come together to beautify her, and to admire her beauty."* He then quotes a large portion of that chapter.

On this extract, I must beg the reader's attention to one or two remarks. The absurd and ridiculous character of much of it, partly indicated by the italics, needs no comment. The "celebrated English divine" is "far from slighting the more literal interpretation of Ben-Ezra." But Ben (or ABEN) EZRA gives no such literal interpreta-

* Pp. 263–265.

tion. He was a man of great learning for his day, and what is still better, of very good sense, and his comment on the text is as follows: "There is no doubt that this prophecy relates to the future; therefore the prophet says, In the latter days. And the meaning is this: inasmuch as he had said before, that the mountain of the house should become high places of the forest,* he (now) turns to comfort Israel, for the glory of the house shall again return. It is (well) known that the mountain of the house was not high. But observe that the sense is this: *its fame shall be widely extended*, and from all corners (of the earth) people shall repeatedly bring offerings to it. It is *as if it were on the tops* of the mountains, and were elevated above the hills, so that all the inhabitants of the earth might see it." To the same purpose also the no less celebrated DAVID KIMCHI, whose comment runs thus: "After having spoken of the devastations of Zion and Jerusalem, the prophet gives them this consolation. It shall be in the last days; which are those of the Messiah. The mountain of the Lord's house, which he says shall be as the high places of the forest,* shall hereafter be established on the top of the mountains. *He does not mean that the mountain shall be raised in bulk, but that the nations shall exalt and honor it*, and shall go there to worship the Lord. And, inasmuch as the nations worshipped their gods upon high mountains and hills, he says that there they shall worship the Lord with one consent, and shall exalt this mountain above all others that have ever been exalted and glorified."† No doubt these and other Jewish Rabbies had extravagant anticipations, but they were not so absurd as some Christian writers would make them.

In confirmation of the correctness of the view just given as that of Aben-Ezra and David Kimchi, if so plain and probable a comment can be thought to need evidence of having been written by men of sense and learning, let me

* Mic. iii. 12. † See my Jewish Rabbies, pp. 198, 199.

quote the equally learned Pococke's Commentary on Micah iv. 1 :* "The mountain of the house of the Lord, &c.; that is, Mount Zion, or Mount Moriah.—Of this the Jews, understanding it, the soberer of them, to omit some wilder and absurd expressions at least, (though we may think they meant not to be understood literally, as if hill should be set on hill for exalting it,) observe, that by saying, it *shall be established on the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills*, is not to be understood that it should be increased in height, but should be made illustrious by glorious privileges conferred on it, tokens of God's peculiar grace, and favor, and presence in it, and the temple on it: in consideration and admiration of which, many people should with reverence and respect look towards it, and in great multitudes flow unto it."

What becomes now of this writer's attempt to make a distinguished Jewish Rabbi, noted for his learning and judgment, give so silly and extravagant a meaning to the prophet's figure?

Let me treat the reader to one or two additional specimens of interpretation asseverated by this expositor of prophecy.

"The law shall go forth of Zion.—What this law is, I know not, if it be not that law which heretofore was given for the government of the nation of kings and priests, but which they kept not, and for not keeping which they lost their inheritance. In that day of the retribution of all things, I believe that the law, moral, judicial and political, which the Lord heretofore gave for the prosperity of men and nations, shall bless men and nations with that blessedness which it, and it only, is able to yield. It is a law of righteousness, given by God as the righteous condition of men in flesh, of men congregated together as families and nations, looking to Zion and Jerusalem as their head city and temple. My conviction is, that *our dispensation, since*

* Oxford edition, folio, 1692, p. 29.

Christ, is altogether an interjected and intercalated period; during which the members of the church that is to be glorified are in succession forming, until the body shall be completed: and this done, *this period, proper to the sons of God, is ended,* and the ways of God in governing men in flesh, *which for this object were suspended,* resume their wonted course. My idea is, that *not the Old Testament, but* THE NEW TESTAMENT DISPENSATION HATH AN END; *and then the other resumes its course,* under Christ and his bride, which is his church."* A sufficient answer to all this is contained in 2 Cor. iii. 11, 13; Heb. xii. 27, 28; viii. 13.

I shall probably have occasion to refer to this exposition again. It is not at all surprising that one who is so confident should dogmatically decide, that "the man whose understanding of God's word is so vitiated as that he cannot see in these superabundant promises the fact of a national restoration to Israel at all, is not in a case to understand any part of Scripture, and will interpret it according to his own prejudices and fancies, or those of the generation he lives in and the men he esteems."†

I turn now from a writer who is led away by an ungovernable enthusiasm, to another whose name is celebrated in various walks of literature, and who is usually under the guidance of a sober judgment.

DR. HENDERSON sustains a high character as a philologist, a traveller and a theologian. And yet he is considerably under the influence of a preconceived theory. In his late work on Isaiah,‡ he sometimes loses sight of the sublime and beautifully poetic imagery of his author, and views only the meagre, prosaic, literal meaning of the burning words and seraphic figures of that lofty genius and divinely inspired prophet. After the splendid and glorious representation made by him in the 60th chapter of the future

* Pp. 270, 271. † Pp. 267, 268.

‡ The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, translated from the Original Hebrew, with a Commentary, critical, philological and exegetical. By the Rev. E. HENDERSON, D. Ph. London, 1840, 8vo.

spiritual condition of the holy people, the true Israel of converted Jews and Gentiles under the great king Messiah; when light shall have poured into them; when everything hostile shall have united in closest affection or have been completely subjugated; when whatever is valuable shall have become their own; when all nations shall have contributed their beauteous and bountiful productions to adorn God's holy house, his spiritual temple; when perfect peace and righteousness and happiness shall be enjoyed; O, how chilling is the bathos which brings down this most celestial delineation to the matter-of-fact business of cutting wood on Mount Lebanon, and transporting it to Jerusalem to build a new temple with; of keeping the gates open, that people in general and travellers may not be hindered from going in and out even at night! Lest I should be suspected of an extravagant exaggeration of the author's statements, I submit the following extracts from his Commentary.

"The inhabitants of the west, especially those which carry on maritime traffic, *shall lay their ships and wealth under contribution to the accomplishment of the purposes of God relating to the restoration of the Jews to Palestine*, and to the further advancement of the divine glory. Their property as well as themselves *shall be conveyed free of charge*, lx. 9. The idea conveyed by the gates never being shut, is that of the continual arrival of the multitudes referred to. *Modern travellers greatly complain of the inconvenience to which they are put when they do not reach Jerusalem before the gates are closed*, 11. A literal temple or house of worship being intended, *the language must be literally explained.*" (The premises being assumed, the inference is of course unfounded.) "From all that appears to be the state of Palestine in regard to wood, *supplies from Lebanon will be as necessary* as they were when the ancient temple was constructed, 13. The temporal prosperity of the restored Israelites shall resemble that of their ancestors in the

days of Solomon, 17. The enemies of Israel having all been swept away by the powerful judgments of God, the most perfect tranquillity shall reign throughout the land, *and those who may go up to worship at Jerusalem* shall enjoy unmolested the fruit of their labor, lxii. 8, 9. Creation is here to be understood not physically, but in a civil and religious sense. The subject is Jerusalem and the Jews. Their restoration will be like a fresh springing into existence; and the constitution to be established among them will be entirely different from their ancient economy, lxv. 17, 18."

Dr. Henderson, it will be observed, speaks of *going up to worship at Jerusalem.* It does not appear that he refers to any but Israelites. The author of the "interpretations" is by no means so exclusive. He extends this privilege to all nations. In Zech. xiv. 16, it is said, that "nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." There can be no reasonable doubt that this is figurative, denoting a general worship of the true God in his true Church. The figure is taken from one of the three joyous annual festivals, which was at once commemorative of past blessing and symbolical of future. It is like the representation of St. Paul in 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, where living a holy life from Christian motives is expressed under the image of purging out the old leaven, and keeping a sacred festival with unleavened bread. This view is in harmony with the context, which illustrates the religious condition of the people thus: "In that day shall there be *upon the bells of the horses*, holiness unto the Lord. Yea, *every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah* shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts," vs. 20, 21. But our author gives a literal exposition of the prophet. After quoting the text he proceeds thus: "This I consider as the best commentary upon the verse under consideration,* and *proves that the words*

* He is speaking of Isa. xii. 3, which, as well as John vii. 37, 38, proba-

are not to be understood in a merely spiritual sense, but in a literal sense; for no one, after reading this passage, can doubt that it is a real feast of tabernacles to which the nations shall be required to come up." He then proceeds to show why this feast in particular "should be set so prominently out, and be so peremptorily enforced, in the day of the millennial glory and blessedness." In attempting to do this, he gives very good reasons indeed for the prophet's selecting it as most happily illustrative of a truly Christian state and worship. He then remarks of the "children of Israel who are the proper subjects of our text," (in Isaiah,) "that there is no hint of their ever refusing to yield the obedience of that ordinance on the tenure of which the millennial blessedness is held: they shall do it with joy and gladness; they shall acknowledge all unto the Lord. They shall year by year strip themselves of houses and of possessions, and be as their father Abraham was. They shall take the natural shelter of the wood, &c.; put themselves into the condition of our first parents when driven forth of paradise, &c.; adopt the symbols of the condition of their fathers in the wilderness, &c. *And this same thing shall the nations be required to do; but not in their own country, but at Jerusalem*, in token of its being the city of the Lord and the metropolis of the whole earth; the centre of the blessing, from which it flows over all the earth; the reservoir for collecting all the praise and thanksgiving *coming from the whole blessed earth* unto Jah-Jehovah. And when they shall cease thus to acknowledge the seed of Abraham as the blessing of all nations, when they shall draw off their allegiance to the nation of kings and priests; when they shall conceive weariness of *this yearly ordinance*," &c. &c. Afterwards he says: "*At the feast of tabernacles all nations are to appear in some way or other, (most likely by deputations of their chief governors,)* when, being all assembled in far greater multi-

bly alludes to the practice of pouring out water, as a symbol, at the feast of tabernacles.

tudes and from far more various regions than heretofore at Pentecost, the mother and metropolitan church in Jerusalem might well say unto them, 'Go your several ways to the nations from whom you are come; Praise the Lord, proclaim his name, declare his doings, make mention that his name is exalted.' "—So confident is this writer of the truth of these and other kindred extravagances that he "denounces" in most unmeasured terms of abuse those who reject the literal meaning of such places, "as not only unbelievers in God's word, but confederate to destroy it." It is amusing, that while he modestly disclaims any "more learning than falls to the lot of common ministers of the Gospel," he does claim to be governed by such "canons of interpretation as *sound sense* furnishes"!!

The language of Isaiah lxvi. 23, is cited in the discourse in confirmation of the figurative meaning assigned to that of Zechariah. The representations are very similar, and the idea conveyed is the same. "It shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD." The absurdity of attempting to explain this literally of going to Jerusalem is palpable. If it should be said, that the prophet does not speak of *going to Jerusalem*, but of *coming to worship before the Lord*, and that this may be done on the occasions mentioned *at any place;* I answer, that the context and usual meaning of the words prove the phrases to be equivalent. The chapter begins by declaring that place in divine worship is comparatively unimportant, and in this view it is quoted by St. Stephen in Acts vii. 49. We read in the 13th verse: "Ye shall be comforted in *Jerusalem.*" But surely no judicious expositor will limit this to the city so called. The 20th and 21st verses, however, are conclusive, and prove beyond a doubt that the prophet's language is figurative. "They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon

swift beasts, *to my holy mountain Jerusalem*, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord." The words under consideration, which follow in the same connection, are therefore undoubtedly of the same import. As in the one case a literal meaning must necessarily be rejected, it is next to impossible to admit it in the other. And if this be figurative, why may it not be allowed that many other representations are figurative? Consistency would seem to require it; it would be entirely in harmony with the analogy of Scripture; and thus multitudes of difficulties would be obviated.

The language just quoted from Isa. lxvi. 20, 31, is illustrative of similar language in the New Testament. I shall limit the application to two passages. We have the same sacrificial figure in Phil. ii. 17: "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith;" that is, 'if I be poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice of your faith and obedience.' The reception of the Gospel by the Philippians, their dedication of themselves thereby to God, is regarded by St. Paul in the light of an acceptable oblation, and his death on account of his efforts in the cause of Christ, as a libation or drink-offering poured out upon it. In Rom. xv. 16, he represents the Gentile converts as an offering, and himself as acting in the character of a priest, and thus "ministering the Gospel." But the representation is figurative, and no more proves the Apostle to have been a real priest, than it proves the Gentiles to have been a real sacrifice.

Note XXIII.—Page 127.

The former of the two cases mentioned occurs in Mr. Irving's book. He is commenting on Isaiah xi. 10, et seq. "Verse 10, In that day it shall come to pass that, &c.:

verse 11, In that day it shall come to pass that, &c. What then is the first of these things that shall come to pass in that day? The thing predicted is, that the Gentiles [*goyim*, the heathen nations, *in contradistinction to the Jews*, who are never but in some threatening called by that name,] shall seek unto the root of Jesse, which standeth for a sign to the people [*ammim*, the *Jewish* people]. The thing to be observed here is, that the root of Jesse first standeth for a sign to the *Jewish people;* not as a sign to the other nations, which is a different event, set forth in v. 12. In v. 10, he is the sign of the *people;* in v. 12, he is the sign of the *Gentiles*. And we may rest assured that there is not a little contained in this *opposition*. Now, it is while the root of Jesse is standing as an ensign to the *Jewish* people, that the Gentiles seek to him." After endeavoring to obviate an objection to his exposition, drawn from Rom. xv. 12, where the Apostle clearly explains of the Gentiles what the author asserts to refer to the Jews, he says: "It is against all laws of interpretation to translate the two Hebrew words written above, *which commonly are in direct opposition to each other*, as if they were the same word, though they occur in adjoining clauses." In the same way he makes statements in another part of his work, where he has in view Micah iv. 1, 2, and the parallel place in Isaiah. "The next thing after the ennobling of the place above all places of the earth, is the flowing of the people unto it; that is, *the people of the Lord, the Jewish people, in contradistinction to the nations, or Gentiles*, who are spoken of next."* Now it happens that the words which occur in these passages, and are in the plural number, are *never* thus used for the Hebrew people as such, but *always* designate the Gentiles or nations. The direct *opposition* or *contradistinction*, which he assures us is so pregnant with meaning, is purely a figment of his own imagination, and consequently affords no support to the theory built upon it. In the New Tes-

* Ubi sup. pp. 148, 266.

tament the corresponding plural Greek word is only *once* applied to the Israelites;* and in that instance, evidently, as the context shows, because they had placed themselves in the condition of unbelieving Gentiles.

The other case occurs in a work on Prophecy by Dr. Apthorp.† It is sufficient to note the point referred to in the discourse, without examining at all the author's application of the prophecy which he is illustrating. He is applying Isa. xxix. 21, to the "impious and unreasonable rejection of Christ," which he represents as "marked with great emphasis." He prints the translation thus:

> "They make A MAN an offender for a word,
> And lay a snare for HIM that reproveth in the gate,
> And turn aside the JUST for a thing of nought."

The comment is as follows: "This indeed is applicable to their treatment of all the prophets; but the emphatic use of the singular so often repeated, seems to point out One eminently, if not exclusively." The remark founded on the singular number is of no force, as nothing could be more natural than the use of it to designate any individual to whom the statement might apply, and the Old Testament constantly employs it to denote any of a class. The pronoun, which is represented as emphatic by being printed in capital letters, has nothing that corresponds to it in the Hebrew, which expresses the idea of the *reprover* by a participle!

NOTE XXIV.—PAGE 131.

I cannot but think that the cause of revealed truth might be exposed to injury, by an attempt to find in history facts

* Acts iv. 27.

† Discourses on Prophecy, read in the Chapel of Lincoln's Inn, at the Lecture founded by the Right Rev. Wm. Warburton: by EAST APTHORP, D.D. 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1786, vol. i. p. 7.

which exactly correspond to each particular specification recounted in some general prediction. It is said of Idumea: "From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and forever. I will cut off from Mount Seir him that passeth out, and him that returneth."* Dr. Keith interprets these places in the most literal and verbal manner, as predictive of the absolute impossibility of passing through the country and returning. He quotes Volney's remark: "This country *has not been visited by any traveller*;" and says, that "fact forbids that the prophecy should be limited to a general interpretation, and demands that it be literally understood and applied." He will not allow that the cases of Seetzen and Burckhardt are "at all opposed to the literal interpretation," although "Seetzen did indeed pass through Idumea, and Burckhardt traversed a considerable part of it." His reason is, that "neither of them lived to return to Europe. *I will cut off from Mount Seir him that passeth out, and him that returneth.*" But this proves too much, for the language of the prophecy as plainly predicts that "none shall pass through it forever and ever," as it does the excision of "him that passeth out and him that returneth;" and yet, he says, "Seetzen did pass through Idumea." Of two other travellers, Dr. Keith remarks, "They did not *pass through* Idumea, and they did return;" but of Seetzen and Burckhardt, they "did pass through it, and they did not return."† I wonder it never occurred to him, that the text to which he attaches so much importance, expressly speaks of the passenger *as returning*.—To "cut off him that passeth out, and him that returneth," is an idiomatic phrase, expressive of *general destruction*. Thus it is said in Zech. vii. 14, "the land was desolate, that *no man passed through nor re-*

* Isa. xxxiv. 10. Ezek. xxxv. 7.

† Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion derived from the literal fulfilment of Prophecy: by the Rev. Alexander Keith. Harper's edition, 1832, pp. 137, 142, 147. The italics are the author's.

turned." The prophet explains the meaning in the very next words: "they laid the pleasant land desolate." To interpret this language respecting the land of Palestine literally, in accordance with Dr. Keith's view of the same phraseology in Isaiah and Ezekiel, respecting the country of Idumea, would be preposterous. We have the same thought repeatedly, and expressed in nearly the same terms. Thus in Isa. xxxiii. 8: "*the wayfaring man ceaseth;*" in Jer. ix. 10, 12: "they are burned up, *so that none can pass through them;* the land is burned up like a wilderness, *that none passeth through;*" in Ezek. xxxiii. 28: "the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, *that none shall pass through;*" in Zech. ix. 8: "I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him *that passeth by, and because of him that returneth,* and no oppressor shall *pass through them any more.*" The Hebrew language abounds with similar idiomatic expressions, with which every expositor ought to be familiar. The enterprise of subsequent travellers, and increasing facilities in the country itself, might be sufficient to neutralize Dr. Keith's conclusion. And this is proved to be really the case by the fact, that Dr. Robinson, our own countryman, has actually traversed the region of country referred to, and returned home in safety.

If the reader will take the pains to examine the prophecy respecting Idumea in Isaiah xxxiv., he will see how UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE it is to explain every particular of the description literally. It is there said that "the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever."* Certainly there is as much exegetical evidence for a literal exposition of any one of these particulars as of any other. If it be said, that with regard to some, such an exposition

* Ver. 9, 10.

would involve an absurdity, it may be replied, that with regard to others, it asserts what is not true. To the same result we must be led by the following verses. The literal expositor may find but little difficulty in the 11th, 12th, and 13th, and even in part of the 14th; but what is the literal meaning of the words, "the *satyr* shall cry to his fellow?" Is there such a creature? and has he roamed about and shrieked among the ruins of Idumea and Babylon? Dr. Keith maintains that even this part of the description is to be taken literally, and that the words simply predict the very common circumstance that the deserted region shall abound with *goats*. He appeals to the authority of Parkhurst and Lowth in support of his opinion, that this is the meaning of the original word in this place, as it undoubtedly is in some others. Parkhurst does indeed so translate it; but Lowth, both here and in xiii. 21, retains the word *satyr*. If it signify *goat*, it will not be easy to say what the prophet means by representing one goat as calling or crying to another; and this part of his description of ruin, desolation, divine "curse and judgment,"* is hardly in keeping with most of the others. The same sort of prophetic threatening is denounced against Babylon in Isa. xiii. 19–22. In both these portions of sacred Scripture, the Septuagint has translated the Hebrew word by *demons*, and it is not to be doubted that the prophet's language has served to mould the description given by St. John of the mystical Babylon in Rev. xviii. 2, which is there said to have "become the habitation of *devils* (Greek, *demons*†), and the hold of every foul spirit. On some parts of this prophecy, the reader will find several important remarks in Arnold, ubi sup., vol. i. p. 413, et seq.

* Ver. 5.

† Perhaps it may not be amiss to remark, that the term *devil*, as designating an evil spirit, never occurs in the New Testament in the plural number. The word is always *demons*. The conclusion, therefore, from Biblical use, would seem to be, that while the Bible recognizes *evil spirits* or *demons* in abundance, it never speaks of more than one *devil*.

I have remarked in the discourse, that the principle therein stated may be usefully applied to parts of some of the imprecatory Psalms. Most thoughtful readers of those Psalms and certain other similar portions of Scripture feel a difficulty in reconciling expressions which seem to indicate an implacable state of mind, with that forgiving gentleness, which alone is in harmony with true religion and holiness. Various attempts have been made to diminish or remove the difficulty. It has been said that the denunciations referred to are prophetic announcements, and therefore are not to be regarded as expressive of the writer's wish. This may be true in some cases, where the future might have been employed in the translation instead of the imperative; but in many this solution will not apply. The thought conveyed is usually this: 'Let proper punishment be inflicted on God's obdurate enemies.' Sometimes this wish is expressed for the ultimate benefit of the offending party; as, for example, in the 83d Psalm, where, after very strong and severe imprecations on God's "enemies," it is said, "fill their faces with shame, *that they may seek thy name, O Lord*," v. 16. But generally the inspired author's intention is, to vindicate and illustrate the purity of the divine nature and government. In all such cases, the inspiration lies in the *general thought.* The *details* or *specific particulars* constitute the *form* in which it appears. This is left to the author, and is therefore modified by his views and feelings; and these are sometimes moulded by the influence of circumstances, and also by the imperfection of the dispensation under which he lived.

Note XXV.—Page 131.

In confirmation of this remark, I cannot forbear calling the reader's attention to a few striking illustrations, although I am aware that the disciples of naturalism have endeavored to set them all aside as irrelevant.

Notwithstanding all the efforts which have been made to explain Psalm xxii. 16, 18, of David, or some other real or ideal sufferer, no exposition is satisfactory but that which regards the language as intended to apply directly to the piercing of the Messiah's hands and feet, and the dividing of his garments by lot, as recounted in St. John's Gospel. The words in Isa. liii. 8, are exactly descriptive of the illegal and iniquitous conduct of the Jewish rulers towards the Messiah. The proper translation, as supported by the meaning of the words elsewhere, is this: 'By an oppressive judgment (or sentence) he was taken away.'* So also in ver. 9: 'They gave him his grave with the wicked;' that is, they designed no other sepulture for him than that of executed criminals; they intended his body to wither and decay, exposed to the wind and the sun, or to become the food of birds of prey. 'But (he was) with a rich man in his death.' The original word for *wicked* is plural, and for *rich* singular; and the description, though brief, harmonizes with the fact of the Messiah's execution in company with criminals, and the respect shown to his sacred body when dead by the "rich Joseph of Arimathea." Another most striking verification of a minute prediction is recorded in the history of the Kings. The future appearance of a descendant of David named Josiah is foretold, and various acts of his in desecration of the altar set up in Bethel by Jeroboam are particularly stated in the first Book. In the second the fulfilment of each of these predicted circumstances is particularly detailed.† The neological interpreters consider the prophecy as having been uttered after the events, as they do also those in Daniel, following Porphyry, the celebrated opponent of Christianity in the third century. But this is a mere begging of the question. Another instance is so remarkable that it ought not to be omitted, although for the sake of brevity I shall merely note it. Zedekiah had been

* See note ‡ in Jewish Rabbies, p. 127.

† 1 Kings xiii. 1, 2, compared with 2 Kings xxiii. 15–18.

threatened with captivity in Babylon, while it had also been predicted that he should never see it. The remarkable fact that the conqueror put out the eyes of his unhappy prisoner as soon as he fell in his power and before carrying him to his capital, is a striking illustration of the minuteness of the prophecy, and of its accurate accomplishment. See 2 Kings xxv. 5–7. Jer. xxxix. 5–7, lii. 8–11. Ezek. xii. 12, 13. Josephus affirms that this seeming discrepancy in the prophecies led Zedekiah to put no faith in them.*

Note XXVI.—Page 135.

I have alluded here to the objections of Gesenius, which the reader may find in his Commentary on the portions of Isaiah referred to. Hengstenberg, in his Christology, has ably refuted them, as he has many other positions of the celebrated philologist and lexicographer. Biblical students of the present day must, of course, avail themselves of the learned labors of this distinguished scholar; but, if they would use them rightly and to the best advantage, they must also keep in mind his neological views, and subject the results of his investigations to the most unbiassed and candid and thorough examination.

Note XXVII.—Page 152.

Our English translation of Gen. x. 21 speaks of Shem as "the brother of Japheth the elder." But, most probably, the clause ought to be rendered, 'the elder brother of Japheth.' For the reasons in favor of this translation, and a reply to the prominent objection urged against it, the reader is referred to my Companion to the Book of Genesis, Note 51, pp. 229, 230.

* Antiq. Lib. x. cap. vii. sec. 2. Edit. Hudson. pp. 444, 445.

Note XXVIII.—Page 157.

This interpretation of Noah's prophecy is given by St. Augustin and other distinguished expositors. A brief, but satisfactory view of this subject may be found in Hengstenberg's Christology, vol. i. pp. 41–46 of Keith's Translation, Alexandria, D. C., 1836.

Note XXIX.—Page 161.

Dr. Henderson speaks in comparatively mild language of the destruction of Israel's enemies. His representation would be unobjectionable, provided it were allowable to understand him figuratively. But the general tenor of his exposition shows that he speaks of a literal excision. "The enemies are all to be swept away by the powerful judgments of God." The author of the "Interpretations" before quoted is more minute and definite in his statement. "When the nations shall cease to acknowledge the seed of Abraham as the blessing of all nations; when they shall draw off from their allegiance to the nation of kings and priests; when they shall begin to conceive malice and enmity to the people who are thus honored above all nations; then God, letting Satan loose among them, shall teach them how much they owe to Satan's restrainer, the Redeemer of Israel; for by him those malevolent humors shall be kneaded up into strong delusion, and they shall rebel against the Jews and their divine king, and come up against the camp of the saints and the holy city in open rebellion, and fire, descending from heaven, shall devour them all.* The Jews, who are Christ's brethren according to the flesh, shall possess the supremacy over the nations as the royal priestly people. But "when at length, breeding serious discontents, they shall be offended in their benignant and beneficent

* P. 211.

rulers; and, instead of going up from year to year to keep the feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem, they shall confederate against the holy city and the camp of the saints; God shall be so indignant at their blackest ingratitude as to rain down fire from heaven upon them, and consume them every one. Until which final consummation the tribes now scattered abroad and oppressed of all nations, shall sit in noble state, and exercise righteous sway over all the nations of the earth. 'They shall abide, because now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.'"*

The objectionable language of the Rev. Hugh McNeil, M.A., on the subject, I have quoted in part in another publication.† I shall therefore only say, that such a theory ought to be substantiated by most incontrovertible evidence before one can be justified in promulgating and defending it.

But I cannot conclude this last note without referring to Mr. McNeil's most extraordinary comment on the language of St. James in Acts xv. The influence which long-cherished and favorite views exercise on the interpretation of Scripture, is the only principle whereby to account for certain expositions maintained by really good and able men. On no other ground can I conceive how the Apostle's address to the council at Jerusalem could be so misapprehended and distorted. "In that council, Peter referred to the special revelation by which he had been led, some time before, to go and preach in the house of Cornelius, upon which James made the following remarkable comment: 'Simeon hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, TO TAKE OUT OF THEM A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME.'‡ Now we have here a distinct declaration of God himself, that the design of this dispensation is to take and save a people *out of*‡ the Gentiles, which is certainly a very dif-

* P. 141, 142. † Jewish Rabbies, p. 138.
‡ The capitals and italics are the author's.

ferent thing from converting and blessing all the families of the earth."*

The reader will bear in mind that *this dispensation* is undoubtedly the Gospel dispensation, introduced by our Lord and established by his apostles under the influence of the Holy Ghost; for it were preposterous to imagine that St. James intended to refer to his brother apostle as being instrumental in introducing any other. Its design, according to the eloquent lecturer, is not to convert and bless "all the families of the earth." But St. Peter and St. Paul apply the promise of God to Abraham, "in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," to the earliest period of Christianity, the very age of our Lord and his apostles, and to the Gospel dispensation as *then* instituted. They must, therefore, of course, have applied it most strangely and unwarrantably. Plainly their view and that of our author are widely different. The popular and ardent preacher would persuade us to believe that it was God's purpose to select *some Gentiles* to be the ostensible depository of his covenant blessings, just as of old he had selected Abraham, and not to extend these blessings among all the families of man! Credat Judæus! It were unnecessary to show how entirely at variance with the whole series of prophetic scripture is such an imaginary theory.

In a note the author develops his views more fully, at least, if not more clearly and satisfactorily. "*After*† this I will return! After what? After a period of desertion, during which the house of David shall be desolate and broken down? *After* such a period I will *return to* it, and build it up. But *during that period*, what is to be done? Is God to be without a people on the earth, *while* he is turned away from the Jewish people, and until he *returns to them?* No. In the interim he hath visited the Gentiles,

* Popular Lectures on the Prophecies relative to the Jewish nation, by the Rev. Hugh M'Neil, M.A. London, 1838, pp. 69, 70.

† The italics are the author's.

to take out of them a people for his name. To *this agree* the words of the prophets, who say, *After* this I will *return;* and I will build again what was fallen down. What is it that is thus described as fallen down and deserted for a season, and afterwards built up *again as in days of old?* Clearly the Jewish nation, the consequence of whose restoration is immediately added, That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, even *all the Gentiles.*

"Thus there is first a period revealed, during which the Jews would be trodden down; and the characteristic of this period is, *a people taken out of the Gentiles.* Then, secondly, after this, a period at which the Jews will be lifted up again. And, thirdly, a period immediately consequent, when *all the Gentiles* will call upon the Lord."

Any extended comment on this remarkable development of the Apostle's language, is wholly unnecessary. It is quite clear that the predictions quoted in the 16th and 17th verses, are applied to the fact which he mentions in the 14th, as having just been stated by St. Peter. In other words, the conversion of the Gentiles, and their union, *then commencing*, with the Jews in the church of Christ, are the verification of the prophecy. To *this fact*, he says that the words of the prophets, from whom he quotes an illustration or specification, agree. The tabernacle of David, that is, the regal spiritual authority of his kingdom, as promised in 2 Sam. vii., to be permanent, *had in a very great degree* fallen down. It was *then in the act of being built up again* by numerous Jewish conversions to Christ, and the Gentiles *were being built up in connection* with it. That is, to use the language of the prophets, *the former were taking possession of or inheriting the latter.* Of course, *this same* spiritual re-edification, comprehending the combination of the two, is to proceed, and doubtless hereafter with increasing extent and strength. But still, it is nothing more than *the growing of the same* holy temple in the Lord, and, in its progress, a further development of the accomplish-

ment of the prophetic word referred to by both the Apostles. The expression, "take out a people," is evidently employed to denote the *commencement of the same dispensation*, which, in its *progress and completion*, is to convert and "bless *all the families of the earth*."

And here I cannot but recall the reader's attention to what is in some danger of being overlooked, or to which, at least, sufficient prominence may not be given. I mean the fact, that very large bodies of the Hebrew nation were in the Apostolic age converted to Christ. It is true, indeed, that they were only "the remnant, the election," the choice few, in contradistinction to the great unbelieving mass. Yet considered in themselves they were very numerous. The three thousand converts of the day of Pentecost were soon augmented by daily additions of "the saved;"* so that "the number of the *men* was about five thousand,"† and we may be confident that that of the women was not less, for they never failed to honor the Saviour at least in an equal degree with the other sex. And, as the truth became better known, "multitudes of believers were added to the Lord," and "the number of the disciples was multiplied."‡ Afterwards we read of "many *myriads*§ of believing Jews" in Jerusalem. On examining St. Paul's Epistles we find that every church to which he writes abounded with Jewish converts; and St. James addressed his letter to "the twelve tribes," as a suitable appellation of the vast and dispersed body of believing Israelites. These facts justify the conclusion, that the fallen-down tabernacle of David,—in other words, the spiritual authority and kingdom of David's Lord, vested in him as the lineal successor, in the most exalted sense, of the son of Jesse, the true prophetic David of Ezekiel,—had been already very greatly

* Acts ii. 47. This is the only correct translation of the original word. Comp. in Greek, 2 Cor. ii. 15, and in Greek also the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp, sec. 17.

† iv. 4. ‡ v. 14, vi. 1.

§ xxi. 20. So the original Greek word ought to be translated.

raised up in the Apostolic age. It would, then, be a gross mistake, to suppose that the ancient prophecies relating to Jewish conversion and the reception of Gentiles into this same divine kingdom of the David, had not been at all verified, or, if verified, at most in a very trifling and unimportant degree.

The view advocated by Mr. McNeil would seem most effectually to militate against all practical missionary efforts, based on a belief that—in respect to the duty of spreading Christianity, as founded by the Apostles, and existing in the world ever since their time in a greater or less degree of vitality—THE FIELD OF OPERATION IS THE WORLD. Because, it would evidently be useless to attempt to spread over all the world a system of religion, the whole design of which, as stated by an Apostle, was nothing more than to make a selection from among the Gentiles of a certain favored class, like the family of Abraham of old, to be, for some indefinite period, the depository of God's truth during the time that the "dispensation" should be allowed to continue. As well might Moses and the prophets have endeavored to extend the Jewish system, at least so far as it did not require residence within the promised land. No: the Gospel, as established by our Lord and his Apostles, among whom St. Peter occupied a most prominent position, is and must be, like its divine Author, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." In various ages of the church, from that of Montanus to that of Irving, certain men have vainly wished to improve it, in order to introduce something new and more spiritual. A melancholy proof of man's weakness, want of faith and submission, self-dependence, conscious superiority, and resolute adherence to a natural preference of his own "Abana and Pharpar" to "the waters of Jordan." May the Merciful and Almighty God grant, that Christianity, *as established* by the Apostle Peter and his inspired and authoritative coadjutors, may not only *take out* of the Gentiles a people for the honor of his holy name,

but also, in accordance with the direction of its divine Founder—"GO INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH MY GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE"—*incorporate into* His original church, along with the faith once delivered to the saints and the very mind which was in Christ Jesus, every individual Heathen, Mohammedan and Jew, so that all mankind may form one brotherhood, most firmly united in the bonds of Christian peace, and truth, and love, and harmony! Amen, Amen!

THE END.

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